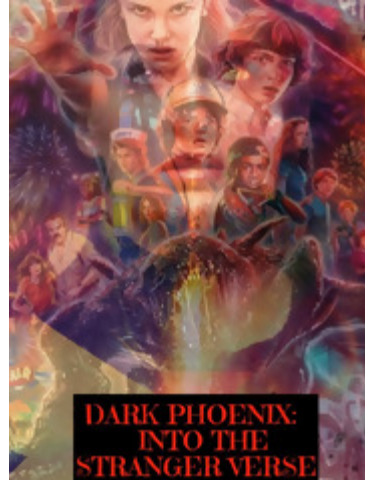




**DARK PHOENIX:
INTO THE
STRANGER VERSE**

Dark Phoenix: Into The Stranger Verse by Tebocchi

Category: Stranger Things, 2016, X-Men

Genre: Romance, Sci-Fi

Language: English

Characters: Billy H., Eleven/Jane H., Jean-Grey S./Phoenix, Steve H.

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2019-08-26 06:06:10

Updated: 2019-11-28 15:35:45

Packaged: 2019-12-12 03:08:50

Rating: T

Chapters: 20

Words: 65,849

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: In which after closing the gate and defeating the Mind Flayer, El Hopper finds an injured red-haired teenager with amnesia in her backyard, and is convinced that she is just like her. Jean Grey, after the events of X-men Dark Phoenix, dies in a burst of energy in the form of a phoenix. Or so the X-men presumed. The Phoenix Force that resides within Jean, is an immortal...

1. Dark Phoenix: Into The Stranger Verse

Summary:

In which after closing the gate and defeating the Mind Flayer, El Hopper finds an injured red-haired teenager with amnesia in her backyard, and is convinced that she is just like her.

Jean Grey, after the events of X-men Dark Phoenix, dies in a burst of energy in the form of a phoenix.

Or so the X-men presumed.

The Phoenix Force that resides within Jean, is an immortal and immutable manifestation of the universal force of life and passion. Born of the void between states of being, the Phoenix Force is a child of the universe. It is the nexus of all psionic energy that does, has, and ever will exist in all realities of the multiverse.

It is described as being "the embodiment of the very passion of Creation-the spark that gave life to the Universe, the flame that will ultimately consume it."

So what if when Jean "sacrificed" herself for the sake of all humanity, she accidentally traveled to an alternate dimension?

This is an X-men: Dark Phoenix X Stranger Things Crossover fanfiction

Follows Post-season 2 to Season 3

Jean Grey and Stranger Things do not belong to me but to Marvel Comics and The Duffer Brothers respectively. I only own this Crossover.

Tebocchi 2019

"There's a dark power inside of me and it's growing."

-Jean Grey

"Like me? Sister?"

-El Hopper

"Hey! So what, we're bringing half-naked strangers into the house now?!"

-Jim Hopper

"So you're the girl found in the woods?"

-Mike Wheeler

"Um, hi, I'm Steve Harrington."

-Steve Harrington

"I'm not afraid to play with fire, babe."

-Billy Hargrove

Cast:

Sophie Turner as Jean Grey

Millie Bobby Brown as El Hopper

Joe Keery as Steve Harrington

Dacre Montgomery as Billy Hargrove

Finn Wolfhard as Mike Wheeler

David Harbor as Chief Jim Hopper

The rest of the Stranger Things cast as themselves

CHARACTER BIOGRAPHY:-

Jean Elaine Grey was born the daughter of John and Elaine Grey. John Grey was a professor at Bard College in upstate New York. Jean's childhood and her relations with her family has been stable, and she had loving family life.

Jean is a member of a subspecies of humans known as Mutants, who are born with superhuman abilities. She was born with telepathic and telekinetic powers.

She is a caring, nurturing figure, but she also had to deal with being an Omega-level mutant and the physical manifestation of the cosmic Phoenix Force.

Jean's mutant powers of telepathy and telekinesis first manifested when she was in a car with her parents, and caused an accident that lead to their deaths. The event left her comatose, and she was brought back to consciousness and helped by powerful mutant telepath, Charles Xavier.

Xavier blocked her telepathy until she was old enough to be able to control it, leaving her with access only to her telekinetic powers, then Charles removed Jean's mental blocks and she was able to use and control her telepathic powers. More importantly, he mentally blocked the truth of her parents' accident from her memories to protect her.

She was then later recruited by Professor Xavier as a teenager to be part of his X-Men team after they defeated En Sabah Nur.

(Summary for those who didn't watch Dark Phoenix)

The President of the United States summoned the X-men for assistance during a crisis and respond to a distress signal from the space shuttle Endeavour, which is critically damaged by a solar flare-like energy.

While the X-Men saved all of the astronauts, Jean was stranded and was struck by the energy which she absorbed into her body to save the X-Men's aircraft from destruction.

Jean survived the event and her psychic powers were greatly amplified as a result. At the same time, the mental block placed by Xavier was destroyed and she accidentally unleashed her power on the mutants celebrating at Xavier's school.

She then traveled to her childhood hometown after discovering that

her father was still alive.

Wrestling with this increasingly unstable power as well as her own personal demons, Jean spirals out of control.

The X-Men attempted to take Jean home but she injured Peter Maximoff and accidentally killed her friend, Raven, before flying away.

Jean then meets with Vuk, the leader of a shape-shifting alien race known as the D'Bari, who explained to her that she has been possessed by a force of cosmic power which wiped out the D'Bari home planet years ago. The power had consumed all those it came across until it was drawn to Jean.

Jean, after being attacked by Magneto and the mutants he recruited, lashes out and attacks them until Xavier convinces her to read his memories - allowing her personality to resurface.

Feeling remorseful, Jean offers to let Vuk take the force from her; however, it is revealed that doing so would kill Jean.

Xavier and Scott were able to prevent Vuk from fully absorbing the force from Jean, though Jean loses consciousness from the ordeal.

Xavier conferred with Jean within his mind, allowing Jean's personality to gain control of the force within her. After forgiving Xavier, Jean saves the mutants from Vuk's attacks and before proceeding to easily disintegrate the D'Bari forces under Buk's command when they attack her.

Vuk once again attempts to drain Jean of the force, but Jean takes Vuk into outer space, retakes the power that Vuk had received earlier, and then kills her. Jean then disappears in a burst of energy in the form of a phoenix.

Jean Grey's "death" and travel across the multiverse caused her sustainable physical and mental damage. Thus, her own brain developed a protective mechanism in which multiple mental blocks - developing amnesia- occurred. All to enable her to cope with the events she's been through.

PERSONALITY:-

Loving: Jean has an incredible capacity for love, and this is one of her most important personality traits. It is one of the things that make Jean undoubtedly Jean-ish. It isn't that she loves her family, friends, and those at the school; it's that she loves life, and she loves humanity. She has such grand hopes for /people, and despite some of the more horrific things she's witnessed, she still has hope and love in her heart. There is nothing she would not do for what she loves, even if it means sacrificing herself to ensure the safety of that which she holds dear.

Determined: Some might call it pure stubbornness -- and they wouldn't exactly be wrong -- but Jean prefers to think of herself as determined. Driven. Feisty. She doesn't take crap from anyone (not /even/ Scott Summers), and when she has something to say she is not afraid to speak up. Jean might know when she is beaten, but she doesn't know when to stay down and give up.

Idealist: Jean is an idealist to the core. She truly and deeply believes in Charles Xavier's dream of equality for mutants, and that someday in the very near future, mutants can live and progress peacefully with non-mutants.

Selfless: Jean is naturally selfless, always giving and genuinely concerned about the welfare and happiness of not only those nearest and dearest, but humanity as a whole. She is the type that would give her last dollar to someone in need, or do without lunch in order to feed someone less fortunate to herself. However, this all keeps Jean rather too busy to look after her own self, so she sometimes suffers because of it.

Soft-Hearted: Anyone with a sob story or just needs a little help to get them through gets Jean all tender-hearted and wanting to help. She is the sort of person who can't resist bringing home a lost or stray animal and trying to find it a good home. The problem is that this drives her to try and reach out, even when it puts her in danger. Sometimes, she just can't see the forest for the trees.

Wild Streak: Perhaps it's a red-head thing, but Jean Grey, despite what some might think, has a wild streak in her. There's a part of her that just craves the freedom of breaking convention and going a little crazy. She

loves fast cars, or riding on the back of a motorcycle that's taking curves way too fast. There are times when she even revels in the exhilaration of using her powers in combat, which becomes especially dangerous when she's pushing her limits.

POWERS AND ABILITIES:-

Telepathy:-

When her powers first manifested, Jean was unable to cope with her telepathic abilities, forcing Professor Charles Xavier to suppress her access to it altogether. Instead, he chose to train her in the use of her psychokinetic abilities while allowing her telepathy to grow at its natural rate before reintroducing it.

Jean Grey can detect and read the thoughts of others, project her own thoughts into other's minds, form psychic links with other beings, control others' minds so as to manipulate their physical functions, mentally stun opponents with bolts of pure psionic force, cast near-flawless mental illusions, and project her mind and the minds of others onto the astral plane. At close range, she can manipulate almost any number of minds; however, she can only take full possession of another's mind one at a time and can only do so if she is within that being's physical presence.

As a side effect of her telepathy, she has an eidetic memory.

Telekinesis:-

Jean possesses a high-level of telekinetic ability that enables her to psionically levitate and rapidly move about all manner of animate and inanimate matter. She can use her telekinetic abilities on herself or others to simulate the power of flight or levitation, stimulate molecules to increase friction, create protective force fields out of psychokinetic energy, or project her telekinetic energy as purely concussive force. The outer limits of her telekinetic power have never been clearly established, though she was capable of lifting approximately fifty tons of rubble with some strain.

Phoenix Force:-

While empowered by the Phoenix Force, Grey has total telekinetic control of matter at the molecular level, allowing her to manipulate atomic structures on a universal scale. She can generate any form of energy in seemingly unlimited amounts, as well as absorb energy from sources as great as a supernova or even convert her physical form to pure energy and back again.

She can also exist in virtually any environment without harm and create space/time warps to travel through hyperspace or traverse the timestream, and her telepathic abilities are also vastly enhanced.

When using her power, the Phoenix Force will manifest itself around Grey in the form of a bird of cosmic flame, the size of the bird varying with the amount of energy she is using. [These flames can even manifests in seemingly impossible situations, such as the vacuum of space or underwater. This fire apparently does not require oxygen to burn, and burns so intensely that matter is consumed without by-products such as ash. The cosmic fire is a literal punctuation to the Phoenix's purpose to "burn away what doesn't work", as well as being described as "burning through lies and deception".]

The Phoenix Force can also resurrect the dead under some conditions, and absorb the life force from other sentient beings to bolster its own.

A/N:-

Sorry if you find this chapter boring, but I think it's necessary for those who aren't Marvel nerds to know Jean before delving into the story.

In this version, Jean Grey is eighteen years old, unlike in Dark Phoenix where she's in her 20s.

Plagiarism and adaptation of this story is forbidden!

Tebocchi 2019

2. CHAPTER 1

Chapter 1: The Mysterious Appearance of the Firey Redhead

DURING the May of 1985, Eleven's romantic relationship with Mike continued to blossom, much to Jim Hopper's dismay. The boy and girl had been officially declared a couple after the Snow Ball dance.

Mike would come over to the cabin as much as he could, but had to leave early most of the time- like he did this very night- after all, he wasn't allowed to be out late on school nights.

Now, El Hopper was in absolute tranquility.

She was alone, laying down on her bed, reading a magazine. The upbeat music song of "*Can't Fight This Feeling*" by *REO Speedwagon* was playing out of Eleven's radio. Said teenager was mouthing along to the lyrics of the song Mike had earlier made her listen to. As she did, El was moving her feet to the rhythm. All was well.

That was until a thunderstorm rumbled throughout the woods.

It was rather odd. There were no previous signs that a storm would be hitting the small town of Hawkins. Eleven though, didn't mind as the rain pattered against her windows.

What stunned the fourteen year old, however, was the lightning that struck so close to her house. It was so intense that prompted her to jump out of her bed in a haste.

El's brown eyes widened as she stared out the foggy glass window, her breathing a bit rapid from the initial shock.

It didn't do the superpower-possessing girl any good when the lights began to flicker.

She abruptly turned her head back to her her radio when static crackling was all that blared from the piece of technology.

Then, she didn't know what was going on, but somehow, at the same time knew what to do. An overwhelming urge to leave her room

surged through her.

Almost against her own will, Eleven's feet lead her to the living room, and she stopped by the door to the house. She hesitated. It wasn't against the rules to leave home anymore now that Hopper officially adopted her, but she wasn't allowed to leave without his permission.

Curiosity getting the best of her, El exited the cabin. The wooden stairs creaking as she made her descent to the twig covered ground.

"Hello?" El Hopper yelled out, but it was barely audible with the thunderous booming, and the wind rushing across the fields.

"Any-body here..?" She asked once more, her voice fading out at the end.

Gulping away the lump in her throat, the girl continued to walk around, sensing a presence near her. *Maybe it was Hop*, she thought.

The rain didn't hold off, drowning the quiet area. The clothes El was wearing hugged her bones and she felt chilly with the rain soaked into her skin.

Despite all her instincts, Jane Hopper advanced deeper into the woods, her eyes darting around in caution.

She stopped in her tracks once she caught sight of something lying on the ground only a feet apart from her.

No, it was *someone*. An unconscious someone.

Rushing, Eleven strided towards the girl, but quickly halted in her steps when an unbearable ringing invaded her head. The brown haired girl clutched her head in her hands, clenching her eyes shut in pain.

It was excruciating.

Suddenly, images flashed in her head. Memories. But they weren't hers. They belonged to the girl lying out cold against a tree.

El had no control over it, she was practically dragged inside the

redhead's mind. *She saw a house, a large one, filled with people walking around, incomprehensible chatter. She saw a pretty girl, the very same red head staring at herself in the mirror, gently gesturing her hand as if to reach out for something. But she didn't move, whatever object she wanted to take hold of came to her.*

She's like me, El thought between the pressured, projected memories.

A mind numbing headache took over El's senses as the memories got even more intense. Glimpses of a maddeningly quiet place invaded her head, she felt like she couldn't breathe, like she was in a vacuum. A dark, cold place from which there was no escape.

"JEAN!" Someone bellowed.

And then there was fire.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration if the young girl said that her whole being was scorched. She screamed as loud as she could, but nothing came out, she heard only but the sparks of the fiercely blazing arms of the flames. And a girl screaming in agony.

And finally, the torture ceased.

Falling to her knees, El snapped her eyelids open, gasping for air. Frantically, she looked around, her ears still ringing from the experience, her breathing was now in shallow pants.

With a sharp exhale, the brown eyed girl pitifully glanced to the poor, half naked redhead. What caught her by surprise was that the latter was awake.

Approaching the mysterious girl, Eleven couldn't help but notice the look of utter fright the girl had on her face as she looked around frantically, it was a look Jane Hopper had on her very own face not long ago.

Breathing heavily in panic, Jean's pained green eyes landed on the stranger who stood over her.

"Where am I?" Jean whispered, still panting, not recognizing the dark gloomy place she was in. She swallowed thickly, her chest hurting;

actually, her whole was body hurting.

Though her eyes were brimming with worry, Eleven looked at her mesmerized. Her eyes almost sparkling, for she had never encountered a person with abilities like her before, save for Kali who had another set of talents.

"Sister?"

A short stammer left the panicked girl's widely open lips, confusion marrying her features. "W-what?"

I have a sister?

Looking over the green eyed girl's form, Eleven inquired, "You okay?"

Jean observed the girl, hoping to recognize her. But the brown haired girl didn't familiarize itself within Jean's hazy mind. "Wh-who are you?"

Jean, still in an alarmed state, quickly got to her bare feet, mud covering her fair skin. "*Please* tell me how did I get here." Her voice trembling as it left her lips.

Eleven sympathetically pursed her lips, still gazing at her. She didn't know how to answer her desperate question.

"I am El."

Face scrunched in perplexity, Jean raked her brain for that name, for any name actually, trying to recognize the younger girl, but failing miserably.

"Come..with me." El comforted, slowly raising her arm and extending it to the lost female.

Jean took a moment as silence fell upon them. She looked at the girl, suspicious and uncertain, but eventually relented and took her hand.

Jim Hopper anxiously paced throughout the living room, wondering where his daughter was. He'd just arrived from another exhausting day of work to an empty home.

Where the hell could she have gone to?!

Deciding to go look for the teenager -the Wheeler's residence was the first to pop up in his head. Damn that kid, Mike, Jim thought. He could've called to check, but no, that was too timid. These kids have been around each other for so long now and they thought they could do whatever the hell they wanted to. He had to show them who was in charge.

Striding to the cabin's threshold, his timorous hand grabbed the knob and the door flew open. Much to the chief of police's relief, he found Eleven at the other side.

With a sigh, Jim's relaxed look morphed into a stern expression.

"EL! Where the hell have you been?!" Did that Mike kid drag you somewhere?! I swear-"

He paused when he saw El's distraught expression. Something was off. It wasn't like her to timidly shut her mouth when he snapped, not these days, she would usually argue back.

"What's wrong?" His tone dialed down a notch, rather softer in concern.

The brown haired girl looked to her left, gently nodding to the girl to show herself from the left of the house's entry.

What Jim saw gave him a stun. It was a girl. A teenage girl at that. Poorly dressed, her shuddering rather exposed body was soiled with mud. Arms hugging her torso and her eyes directed a gaze at the floor that never faltered.

"So what, we're bringing half naked girls into the house now?!"

"Here you go." Jim spoke as softly as he could, placing the warm cup of coffee on the table for the redhead to drink. He pulled a chair and sat down facing her as Eleven stood by his side, holding a plate, her concerned eyes focused on the strange girl.

The fourteen year old explained to her father how she found her in the woods terrified and confused.

"Thanks." She muttered, pursing her lips as she wrapped her slender fingers around the mug, she inspected it and almost lost herself in the darkness of the drink.

She was calmer now after taking the shower she was offered. Earlier she was covered in dirt and her hair was knotted and not as well combed as it was now. Now she was more beautiful and radiant. Though Hopper's baggy clothes hung loosely on her figure, it was better than nothing.

El put the plate on the table, offering red haired girl waffles and eliciting a grateful nod from her. The teenager didn't know just how much it meant when Eleven offered her precious Eggos.

"Let's start with something simple." Hopper placed his elbows on the table, inspecting the girl before him. "I'm Jim Hopper, Chief of police. And you are?"

His question made her think for a moment.

People shouldn't think twice about answering what their name was, why was she hesitating?

"Jean..." She trailed off, her voice fading at the end. "Jean Grey."

Chief Hopper nodded, a tight lipped smile was on his face. "Okay, Jean. You from around here? I haven't seen you before."

Jean gulped.

"I-I don't know."

Jim's dark brows furrowed. "What do you mean, '*you don't know*'?" His tone rising a bit.

Eleven's eyes darted from Jean to Hopper once she saw her flinch. "*Hopp*." She cautioned.

Hearing his adopted daughter calling his name, Jim tore his eyes from Jean and guided them to the young girl. "What?"

She quickly shifted around and started walking towards the other end

of the living room, assuming that Hopper followed her- which he did.

"Like me." She whispered.

"Huh?"

"She's like me." El emphasized. Jim narrowed his eyes, guiding his glance from his daughter to the redhead then back again to El.

"What? That's not possible." He said. Gesturing to Jean, he made Eleven look to the girl sipping at her coffee. "Look, she doesn't even have a numbered tattoo like you do. And the lab, they shut it down months ago."

Eleven almost cringed at the mention of that horrific place. She was kidnapped and raised in the National Laboratory, where she was experimented on for her inherited psychokinetic abilities. The thought of the older girl going through what she's been through made her stomach turn.

Pursing her lips, El Hopper was pulled out of her thoughts. "*Like me.*" She repeated, emphasizing her words.

"Okay, what makes you so sure?" He asked.

"I saw it." Was her simple answer.

"When?"

"Outside, just now. She showed me like Mama." She replied. Those were memories, she was sure of it, just like she'd seen her mother's. The only difference is that she wasn't in the Void like when she went through her mother's head.

"You went through her head? What did you see, anything useful?" He whispered, now hopeful to know who this girl was.

Eleven shook her head. "I saw her using abilities like me."

"You sure?" Questioned Jim, he was still doubtful.

El gave him a quick nod.

Jim pursed his lips as he went back to the anxious looking girl.

"Hey, kid. Did you uh-" He stammered, he hoped this wasn't the case. "Did you run away from the lab?"

"What lab?" Jean asked, her translucent green eyes darting to the older man.

"The Hawkins Lab, did you come from it."

"I don't know what you're talking about?" She said, even more confused.

"Where did you *come* from?" He asserted, the man was getting more agitated by the minute.

Jean's lower lip trembled, her eyes were turning watery. She raked through her head, but something was blocking her from finding anything.

"I- I don't know, I don't know anything. All I can remember is my name." Tears threatened to fall down her cheeks as she spoke. "You don't believe me?"

Eleven jumped to answer before Hopper could, looking sympathetically at the older female. "We believe."

Sighing, the man looked at both girls, wondering what the hell to do. "Yeah, okay. Why don't you two go to bed for now. We'll figure out whatever this is tomorrow morning." Hopper exclaimed, gently slamming his palms on the table.

A/N:-

Sooo this is the first chapter, I know it's quite uneventful but it will progress faster as we go.

I know this is waaaaay ahead time, but who would you like Jean to end up with? Steve or Billy? I'd love to know what you think!

Don't forget to vote and comment

3. CHAPTER 2

Chapter 2: The Amnesic Weirdo With No Powers

"YES, Grey is her last name."

Chief Jim Hopper confirmed, head tilted to the side to lean his ear against the phone.

"Look, I don't *know* if it's with an E or an A, all I know is that I have a teenager who doesn't know who she is or where she came from."

He paced anxiously back and forth across the living room, chewing on his bottom lip. He was getting irritated by the second, and who could blame him? Calling all morning every hospital in the state to check if she's been a patient or at least registered in their files was a task that didn't come to any fruition.

"For *godsakes*! Just tell me if you have any hospital records in her name."

"No?" He stopped by the kitchen counter and grabbed a pen to scratch yet again name off his list of searches. "Well, thanks."

Sighing in frustration, the man -already in uniform- grabbed his hat and placed it on his head. He walked up to El's room who must've left the door ajar last night.

Jim's eyes softened when he saw the two girls sleeping in bed; El softly snoring and her arm was draped over Jean's torso.

What on earth is he gonna do with her?

He thought before heading to work, which he was already late for.

~~~

The two girls woke up late that morning.

Jean was calmer at the moment, despite all the confusion. She was thankful to both Hopper and El for taking her in and letting her stay

the night. She'd slept in the same bed as El and was provided with a toothbrush. Eleven acted so tenderly towards her, treating her like she could break ever so easily.

What she didn't know was that she was behaving this way because she knew exactly how she felt.

"Breakfast?" Eleven cooed.

With a nod, the green eyed teenager dedicated her a soft smile to which El returned.

"Umm.. Yeah, sure." Jean still found it hard to act normally after the previous events of last night.

"When you said, 'like me' just now, what did you mean?" Jean asked Eleven after they both entered the bedroom.

*El, who was making the bed, moved her surprised eyes to the taller girl.*

*"I overheard you and Hopper talking." Explained Jean.*

*Eleven breathed in sharply, her shoulder slightly raising as she replied to her. "Don't remember? You can do what I can."*

*"What you can do?"*

*Eleven pursed her lips, she didn't know how to explain her abilities; so she found it was best to show her.*

*Jean's body went rigid at what she witnessed.*

*The fluffy white pillow that rested on the bed lifted all on its own and hovered in the air.*

*The redhead could feel her the breath catching in her throat as the object guided itself into El's arms.*

*"What the hell? How did you do that?!"*

*"You can do it, too. I saw it in your memories." Eleven said.*

*"My memories? How'd you- what did you see?!" Jean's head was*

*bombarded with questions on who she was, where she came from, and now she even questioned the very fabric of her reality.*

*"You were using..abilities, that was all I saw."*

*The amnesic girl sat on the bed with a thud, attempting to process the information she's been given. "So does that mean I'm uh-h-a freak?"*

*Eleven grew tense at the question. "No."*

*Seeing how her question must've sounded, Jean was quick to apologize, she was talking about herself, in no way trying to insult the younger girl. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to upset you, it's just- this has got to be a lie."*

*"Friends don't lie." Eleven answered all too quickly, her tone assuring. "Rest." She soothed, hesitantly lifting her arm to pat the older girl's head. "Night, Jean."*

*Jean's eyebrows lifted, amused and somewhat comforted by Eleven's affectionate act. "Good night, El."*

El went to the kitchen. Since they unfortunately ran out of Eggos the night before, the fourteen year old was forced to make an actual meal.

Opening the fridge, Eleven crinkled her nose at the thought of cooking, but as her brown eyes roamed on the other side of the room she decided to try and make some food for the poor girl. She's watched Hopper cook breakfast all the time, how hard can it be?

Jean made her way into the kitchen and found El attempting to crack eggs bit making a mess instead. "What you doing?" She asked, mouth half open in amusement.

Eleven paused to wipe her yolk-soaked fingers on the kitchen rag. "...Cooking." She answered, in a manner of factly. She groaned, tweezing out the tiny shells that spill into the bowl.

Jean tried to stifle her laughter, but failed miserably. As she giggled, Eleven frowned at her, but eventually joined in, laughing loudly.

Once they ceased their cackling, Jean lifted a finger to wipe at the

tears that formed in the corner of her eye. "Here, let me." She exclaimed, softly tapping El's shoulder.

Eleven reluctantly moved from the counter and watched as Jean held an egg in each hand and tapped the eggs together. And she used her fingers to split open the eggshell, then pour the yolk and white out into a bowl. She did this so quickly, it sort of astounded El. It was like she was used to it, like it was part of a routine. For someone who had no memory of anything but their name, it kind of came as a shock to Eleven.

What she didn't know was that cooking, along with other long learned body functions such as even as playing an instrument, are functions of our very long term memory and usually not affected by amnesia.

After she was done cooking, Jean placed both plates on the table and sat beside Eleven. The latter smiled and began eating delightfully.

"Is it good?" Asked Jean. And El nodded hurriedly.

"Hey, El," Jean blurted after taking a sip of her orange juice. "You said that I could do the thing that you can..." She said, no longer able to contain her curiosity.

"Yes." Eleven replied.

"Well, I- I don't think that's possible."

Seeing how reluctant Jean was to El's truth, a wooden chair screeched across the hardwood floor, almost tripping backwards as the brown haired girl abruptly stood and walked around the kitchen island. She opened a cabinet and grabbed something before strided back to Jean. She placed two plastic cups in front of them.

Jean's green curiously back and forth from El to the cups, wondering what will happen.

El gazed at one of the cups, her focus unwavering as she furrowed her brows. And Jean gasped once the cup was crushed on its own.

"You try." El suggested, wiping her bloody nose.

"How?" Was all Jean could muster.

"Just...focus on what you want to do." To be honest, that was the best explanation El could give. She was never taught of her powers, just pushed into performing them and punished when she failed to do so.

Copying what she'd seen Eleven do, Jean glanced at the cup.

After a whole minute of focus, she sighed, running her hands through her head. "See? I-I can't do it." She couldn't mask how grateful her tone sounded. She *needed* to be normal.

"It's ok. It took me a while, too." She consoled. Initially, exercising her abilities to accomplish small tasks was rather difficult for her. However, with practice, Eleven was able to accomplish greater and greater feats.

But what she didn't know is that Jean didn't *want* to be like her, she didn't want to be able to do things others couldn't, her mind screaming at her that she was normal and nothing but.

The two spent the entire noon watching TV to pass the time. Watching comedy shows and laughing occasionally. El would continue to glance to the girl next to her, her eyes lightening to see the redhead smiling.

If anything were to see how Eleven came to care for a stranger so quickly they would be astounded. But El felt immense sympathy for Jean, protective of her, even. She experienced suffering no one could imagine; and El knew this. Sure she saw only glimpses and pieces, but she *felt* it all.

*So much pain.*

She wanted to help her, much like her friends and Mike had helped her. And speaking of the devil...

A series of knocks blared throughout the living room, causing Jean to slightly flinch.

Eleven Hopper furrowed her dark brows in confusion, who would come by at this kind of time? It certainly wasn't Hopper because he

had a key.

"El?" A boy's voice was heard next.

*Mike*, Eleven deduced.

She ran to the door and flung it open, revealing the smiling, eager boy.

"Hey." Mike Wheeler greeted, moving his foot in front of him to enter, but was stopped by Eleven's unmoving figure.

"..What are you doing here?" She asked, holding the door knob.

"I skipped last period so we could hang out." He answered.

"You.. Shouldn't have." El's eyes traveled to her left to see Jean tilting her head in confusion, and then Eleven looked back to Mike.

Mike's grinning face morphed to that of confusion. This was not the reaction he was expecting. "I wanted to. This way Hopper wouldn't be all over us about his stupid three inch rule." It was the end of the school year anyway, so it didn't matter, he thought.

Mike went to speak again to ask what the problem was, but stopped himself when he saw an unfamiliar girl standing behind his girlfriend.

"Who's that?" He asked El, gesturing his head towards the taller, red haired girl.

Eleven looked between the two, not knowing what to say.

"Hi, umm-" The Wheeler boy stammered, speaking to pretty older girl. "I'm Mike." He awkwardly introduced himself.

The redhead smiled at him, nodding. "Jean."

Eleven and Mike sat alone in her bedroom, the couple were facing each other, legs crossed.

Eleven had guided him inside in a haste to explain the situation. She

told him how she found her alone and scared in the woods much like he found her two years ago. The young girl explained how extremely convinced Jean was just like her; born with abilities.

"So, you think she's like Kali? The girl that was with you at the lab?" Mike inquired after El's declaration. Of course he knew of Kali; number eight, Eleven's 'sister', the one who El searched for in her journey of self discovery.

Eleven gave him a confirmatory nod.

"But how come she can't remember anything but her name?"

She shrugged, she had no knowledge on that front.

"When I saw her... I-I could feel all her pain." El's eyes were getting watery, as she remembered what she'd seen. The suffering, the fire, she felt like she was choking in a vacuum, no one would hear her screams no matter how much she tried.

She couldn't bring the experience to the right words, this being the best she could express. At first, due to a very limited vocabulary, Eleven could not effectively communicate her thoughts and emotions. However, after nearly a year and a half of living with Hopper, Eleven's vocabulary expanded significantly, although she still struggled to understand complex words and social cues.

With a gulp, Mike pursed his lips. He moved his hand from his lap to place on Eleven's own, signaling for her to continue speaking.

"She was showing me like Mama, but it was... Different." She said. The experience was on a different level; for one she wasn't in the Void at the time, and she didn't even have to touch her to see what was in her head. It was like Jean was broadcasting her memories onto the younger girl.

"I want to help her." El asserted, her eyes shone in determination as she looked up at Mike.

The boy smiled at her kindheartedness and agreed. "We will."

He looked at the clock on her bedside table and found that it was



getting late, he should've went back home from 'school' by now.

He jolted up from the bed, about to say goodbye but was interrupted by his first love.

"She couldn't use powers..."

He furrowed his brows at her. "Maybe she's drained, you could always try with her later." Mike said. He believed El wholeheartedly. The boy assumed that just like Eleven, the use of the redhead's powers took a toll on her. Perhaps that's what it all was, maybe she used her powers to such an extent that she entered such a confused state.

"Don't worry, she'll be fine. I *promise*." He assured before giving her a quick peck on the lips before leaving.

The moon was out and the summer winds were blowing.

Jean had taken a nap after making dinner, her whole body seemed to have yet to recover from whatever it has been through.

She abruptly woke up to the sound of a whoosh and a thud. After hearing a man's voice, she deduced that it was Hopper.

The redhead sat up on the bedclothes of the bed.

"F-Found anything?" She heard El speak.

"Not a damn thing." Hopper answered, his tone suggested at his aggravation. "I made phone calls, went through registries. How she even got here without anybody noticing her is a mystery!" He hissed. "Either she's lying about her name or she's just a ghost."

Hearing this slightly broke Jean's heart. Why would she lie? What would she gain from any of this? She asked herself. If only they knew how much she struggled to remember, to recall anything from her life. But it was like she was pushed away from her memories by her own mind.

She took her right hand and moved the blanket off her slightly aching body, sitting on the edge of the bed. Her sullen face lightened up a

bit upon hearing El's assertive voice.

"..Not lying."

"Fine. We'll wait to see if anything comes up, and if it doesn't I'll contact Dr. Owens."

*Who was he? Was he a psychiatrist?*

"No." Eleven said, in an almost commanding manner.

"Hey, he's a good guy. The adoption papers wouldn't have gone through as smoothly as they did if it weren't for him."

Jean felt wrong hearing them, like she was eavesdropping or something. But what were she to do?

"I know you want what's best for her, but you gotta trust me on this." Hopper said.

She got up and walked on the tip of her toes, and stopped at the door. She shouldn't impose on their private conversations - even if they did concern her- after they oh so kindly took her in. So she shut the door as smoothly as possible, no longer being able to listen to a word they said.

"Did she remember anything, anything about the memories you've seen? About her powers?" Jim asked his daughter, sitting down on his lazy boy to take his shoes and socks off.

"I-We tried but nothing happens." Eleven's tone showed uncertainty as she spoke.

Hopper nodded in understanding.

"Why don't you lay off it for a while?" Getting up to walk to the kitchen table, Jim suggested. And El's face scrunched in confusion. "I'm sure when someone becomes amnesic, hearing that you have superpowers isn't the first thing that you wanna find out."

"*Ammesic?*" She repeated the unfamiliar word, not understanding its meaning.

"Amnesic, yeah. It's what you would call a person who loses their memories." He replied, standing over the table and inspecting a foil covered plate.

"Amnesic." She repeated.

Jim chuckled.

Grabbing a bite of the chicken on the plate after removing the foil, Jim moaned. "Did she make this?" He asked, his mouth half full.

Eleven nodded with a smile.

"It's good." He commented, sitting down.

Silence fell upon the two. Jim's eyes darting from his plate to the Eleven's shut bedroom. "Listen, why don't you uhh- both of you why don't you go out tomorrow?"

"Go out?" Eleven eagerly asked.

"Yeah, I mean, maybe that'll be a good way to jumpstart her memories. What do you think?"

She *vigorously* nodded.

"But you know the rule." He cautioned.

"Too many people, too dangerous." She stated, practically gushing at the idea of going out tomorrow.

"Good." He smiled in satisfaction.

"Mike's?" Her doe, hopeful eyes widening as she asked if she were allowed to go to her boyfriend's place.

Hopper visibly cringed in a cringe at the mention of the boy. He and his daughter were spending way too much time together, and it was *wrong*. It wasn't healthy. "Not exactly what I had in mind... Why don't you go to the arcade? The whole place is a ghost town anyway with the mall opening up."

"Okay."

"Just lay low. And if anybody asks about her, just say she's family, visiting or something. We don't want her attracting too much attention." He urged.

Eleven made a mental note to warn Mike from telling anyone about Jean.

## 4. CHAPTER 3

### Chapter 3: The Arcade And The Denim-clad Flirt

JEAN Grey loved when the wind entered through the car's open window and hit her face, blowing her locks off her shoulders.

In all honesty, the quietness of the town agreed with her, the structures surrounding her all looked slightly abandoned though. She calmly watched as a few people tended to their shops duties down the road as Jim drove.

As promised, Hopper got off work to take the girls to the Palace Arcade. He was hesitant at first, but seeing now how Downtown was beginning to clear out due to the recently opening mall, he dropped them off relieved.

Jean and Eleven stopped outside the place for a moment, observing the white upside down triangle sign spinning slowly above the place.

Once they entered, Jean looked around the dark near empty place.

Then the redhead -followed by El- pranced towards a machine, colorful lights of the video game swallowing her up.

For some reason, when she had walked in, one of the workers' - an incredibly tall one- breathing hitched when his eyes landed on her. He scampered from in front of a game, wiping his cheetos stained hands on his pants and went to hide behind the counter.

A bemused Jean teared her eyes off him and entered a quarter, courtesy of Hopper, and began playing. It was a game called Road Fighter; a racing game.

Eleven just stood by her side, watching the girl struggling at first then getting used to the arcade game.

"So," Jean began, her eyes glued to the bright screen. "The boy that came over yesterday-"

"Mike." Eleven added.

"Yeah, Mike. You've been talking to him all night, right?" Pressing the 'A' button to skyrocket the speed to 400, Jean, for a fraction of seconds, occasionally glanced to El to see her blush. The couple would usually spend every waking moment chatting with their walkie-talkies.

"Yes." She replied, smiling bashfully. "He's my boyfriend."

The Amnesic girl's lips stretched in smile from how precious El sounded just now.

Almost reaching the final stage of the race, Jean unfortunately lost and ran out of fuel. Once 'Game Over' appeared on the screen, the tall girl turned sideways to glance at Eleven. "You wanna play?"

Eyes widening nervously, El spoke. "... I don't know how."

"I thought you said you come here most of the time." To Jean's knowledge, El was home-schooled for the time, unallowed to go anywhere with a crowd, so this place was perfect for her. She found it a bit odd, but given the situation of El possessing superhuman abilities, it made sense for her father to be careful.

"I just watch Mike play." Eleven replied.

"And where's the fun in that?" Said Jean, her lips stretching playfully, eyes glinting. "Here." She urged, moving away from the machine and gently pushing El towards it.

Eleven was dubious but complied.

"Just reach the finish line within the stages without running out of time."

"Try not to hit other cars." She advised, watching the tense girl struggling with the controls.

"Oh, you're running out of fuel, hit that car." Pointing at the multi-colored car, Jean said.

"You said not hit cars." El retorted.

"Yeah, but this one's special, it gives you fuel."

*How can hitting a car give fuel?* El logically thought.

Not paying attention, Eleven's car slipped on the occasionally appearing patches of oil, and the car will began to spin out. It happened so fast that she could not correct it and crashed into the side barriers.

"Not bad for a first try." The redhead cooed, bumping hips with El.  
"My turn."

After a while, a group of children walked into the arcade that only housed a few of people, Jean noticed. They were five in number, one girl and the rest were boys. They all seemed to be around El's age.

It was Mike and the rest of their party.

Seeing her boyfriend, Eleven rushed to his side by the threshold of the arcade, while the rest entered, walking past her.

"Hey." Mike said, smiling softly as he reached out to hold her hand in his.

"Hi," El greeted back. "Mike, Hop said not tell anyone about how I found her." She said in a haste, worried about the repercussions that Jim had warned her of.

Mouth open, about to speak, Mikael was interrupted by Dustin's loud voice.

"Are you the naked girl that El found in the woods?" The young boy inappropriately asked, smiling in awe at the rather embarrassed redhead.

"Dude," Will softly said, barely in a whisper, poking Dustin's side.

Eleven, after seeing the scene play out glared at Mike, but her harsh stare lacked bite.

"Sorry." Mike pursed his lips, giving his girlfriend an apologetic look. Eleven just continued to stare judgementally at the boy.

"Look, it's fine. They wouldn't tell anybody else. Besides, how are we supposed to help her without the gang?" He argued, El beginning to relent.

Meanwhile, the poor Jean Grey was bombarded by an array of questions from the fourteen year old boys.

"So do you really have superpowers like Eleven?"

"How did you walk around the woods if you weren't wearing any shoes at the time?"

Seeing how visibly uncomfortable the fellow redhead was becoming by the second, Max groaned loudly.

"What?" Lucas asked, the sound his girlfriend made grabbing his attention.

"*Shut up*, losers." She rebuked both Dustin and Lucas, and the two immediately shut their mouths. And Jean was honestly impressed by her domineering persona.

With a roll of her blue eyes at her friends' lack of delicacy - save for Will- Max Mayfield turned to the tall girl. "That your score?" She asked, looking over the machine behind her, to which Jean nodded in reply.

Max slightly smirked. "Not bad. Come check out Defender, I have the highest score." As she spoke, she held Jean's hand and practically dragged her away from the boys.

"I'm Max, by the way." The redhead introduced. While Max' hair was slightly orange-ish in color Jean's was a deep shade of red, resembling an angry flame.

"Jean."

"Yeah, I know." Max smiled politely. After what Mike had told them, about El finding her, her amnesia and how much she suffered according to her jumbled 'memories'. And while her friends chose to let their curiosity get the better of them, Max tried to distract her with the only way she could.



She hoped she could be friends with Jean, especially since El flat out rejected any friendly gesture from her ever since they met.

"So, uhh, how do I play?" Jean asked.

"It's just a basic side-scrolling shooting game."

"Oh, it sounds easy enough."

"Trust me, it's not." Maxine was quick to reply. "It's set on the surface of an unnamed planet, your goal is to destroy alien invaders."

"She looks... Normal." Lucas commented, his, Dustin and Will's eyes following the two redheads' interactions.

"What do you mean?" Will asked, his eyebrows slightly furrowed.

"I *mean*, there's no way she's from the lab." Lucas exclaimed, turning his head to look at the boys. Mike had proposed the possibility that somehow she came from the lab as well, or at least experimented by the government somewhere and she escaped. But as he analyzed her demeanor, he gathered that it wasn't the case. "Think about it, El was acting entirely different from her; she didn't know how to speak or deal with people, and she kinda looked weird, too." The boy said, earning agreeing looks from his friends. Eleven's vocabulary was limited when they'd met her, and she behaved cautiously around them at first. With her shaved head and staring eyes, she completely stood out.

Will nodded even though he'd never met El until last year, and by then she was an entirely different person from what his friends had described.

"Also, she's really pretty." Dustin breathed out, his awestruck eyes focusing on Jean.

"Come on, let's see if today's the day you beat *my girlfriend's* high score on Dig Dug." The african american boy smugly said, bragging that he had such a cool girlfriend.

Meanwhile, Jean began controlling the space ship as it navigated the terrain, using the joystick to elevate the ship.

Watching closely by her side, Max added, "Make sure you protect the astronauts."

Hearing what came out of Maxine's lips, the whole of Jean's being experienced a shiver.

*'Ladies and gentlemen of NASA, this...-Help is on the way.'*

Jean paused the gameplay once she'd heard a man's voice echoing through her head. Most of the words were powered over by a loud ringing noise that didn't make much sense.

"Wh-what?" She muttered.

"Yeah, the whole planet sort of explodes if they get hurt. It's weird, I know." Max replied, apparently missing the other girl's tense state.

Jean attempted to shrug off her thoughts, pressing one of the five buttons to control the horizontal direction of the ship and its weapons.

Throughout the entirety of the game, Jean's pulse was clear in her ears.

Breathing picked up as flashes took over, the screen becoming hazy. Everything was becoming blurry.

With that, her ship exploded after it was hit by an enemy projectile, causing her to jump back.

"Hey, are you okay?" Max's voice was a mere whisper compared to the man shouting in her head.

*'Jean! JEAN!'*

"Jean!" Said girl was forcefully dragged out of her daze when Max began to shake her shoulder.

"Is everything okay?" Asked the concerned blue eyed girl.

With a sharp exhale, Jean hesitantly nodded, glancing at Max. "Yeah, yeah. I just need some fresh air." She lied, walking away without

waiting for a reaction from the girl.

Jean's heart was pulsing overtime in its ribcage as she roamed the arcade, which felt incredibly stuffy now. She was becoming disoriented.

She heard whispers, somehow bypassing her ears and intruding her head. She felt like she was going mad.

*'We haven't played DD in a while.'*

Hearing a soft boyish voice, her head turning abruptly to identify the source.

*'Yeah, you can do it, Keith. Just go up to her and ask her out.'* Jean glanced in a haste to the other side of the room to see a guy sitting at the counter, he was nodding to himself as he stared at her. *'Holy shit, she's looking at me. Abort mission. Abort mission!'* His face held a panicked expression.

Jean's perplexity was peaking, her eyes now as wide as saucers. How was he speaking without moving his lips?

Her breathing was now uneven, she moved to the exit in a hurry, unable to stay there any longer.

She left the arcade but not before hearing a boy wearing a hat shouting at a game without his mouth opening. *'Die! DIE! DIE, YOU PIECE OF SHIT!'*

The light rays that the sun irradiated outside managed to blind her vision for a few moments, motivating her to slightly squint. The voices had dissipated from her head and nerves wrapped around her in its place.

Once she saw a nearby water fountain, she sprinted across the carpark towards it. She *needed* to cool down. After taking a few sips from the cooler, Jean used some of the water to splash on her face.

Ahead of the red haired female was a video store that was part of the arcade establishment, she saw her reflection in its window. Growing anxiety in Jean's heart felt all too much like electricity when her

image became distorted, her eyes glowing in a golden color, streaks of gold resembling veins were splayed out across her face and neck. The sight terrified her.

This wasn't her staring back at her.

Jean felt that all her senses had heightened for this brief moment as she stared at *herself*?

At that moment, with no warning whatsoever, the glass cracked.

Did she do that?

Whatever was happening was too intense for Jean. She grabbed her neck and shut her eyes. Her heart beating at an abnormal speed and cold sweat took place on her forehead.

Admittedly, after some time of deep breaths, leaning her back against the hood of a dark blue car, she managed to calm down.

*'Who the hell is this?'*

With a violent jolt, Jean looked back to the source of the deep voice.

The winds paused momentarily as if the wind itself was watching with a held breath as a guy wearing denim on denim, and boots approached her.

"I'm- I'm sorry?" She asked in a whisper, hoping to understand why he was talking to her.

The boy who held car keys in his hand -this car presumably being his- shook his head, his blonde locks of hair slightly moving as he did. "I didn't say anything."

"Oh, I- Just.. Nevermind." With a harsh gulp, Jean mustered the best polite smile that she could before turning to walk away.

"You okay?"

Jean tilted her head back to look at him and she saw that he had approached her. "Yeah, I'm fine."

The guy smirked before resting his palm onto his car hood. He leaned forward, bringing himself closer to Jean and completely invading her space.

Despite the disheveled appearance and baggy rags that she was wearing, Billy had to admit that this girl was the prettiest he'd encountered in this god forsaken town.

She was tall, with a lovely figure that those oversized clothes failed to hide. She had translucent green eyes, and rosy pink lips. But what had first caught his attention was her fiery red hair, silky smooth tresses falling down her shoulders to her back.

"I'm Billy, Billy Hargrove." He smirked, extending his hand to hers to shake, to which she complied.

Billy held her hand for a longer period than Jean would have liked.

"Jean, Jean Grey." She copied his style of self introduction, a lighthearted mockery entangling in her tongue.

But the stun from before still didn't leave her as she looked somewhat anxious.

Billy chuckled, falsely assuming that she was nervous to be in the presence of his handsome self. He wasn't going to lie, the boy enjoyed how girls turned dreamy when seeing his perfect pearly smile, or how his jeans hugged his ass in the most glorious of ways.

"So what's a pretty thing like you doing in a shithole like this?" He was suave and charming as he asked her.

"Hanging out with friends." She replied, her light green eyes traveling to the arcade for a second before she turned them back to the slightly taller male.

"This is a small town, how come I haven't seen you around before?" Billy asked, he *definitely* would have noticed her in school, crappy clothes and all.

His question took her slightly by surprise, but remembering what Hopper had told her, she answered almost robotically. "I'm just

visiting."

"Right.." His gaze was unwavering on her entire figure.

While most girls would swoon with a single look from the blonde boy, Jean felt nothing but awkward, like he was objectifying her.

"Well, Jean, why don't we-"

As he spoke, about to ask her out, Jean took notice that El and the gang had exited the arcade, eyes worriedly darting around, probably looking for her.

"I have to go. Bye." Her interest had slipped upon seeing the group of people exiting the arcade, and she vanished rapidly, leaving Billy vexed by his car.

Billy was flabbergasted as she ran to the group of children, stopping by their side and her expression was significantly lighter. And what took him by surprise is that Max seemed to know her, too.

His step-sister strided towards him after she'd noticed him staring at her and her friends and he muttered something about her being late.

After the events at the beginning of November of last year -Billy being sedated by Max at the Byers' house after he started a chaotic fight- Max and Billy's relationship dynamic changed.

They weren't crazy close or anything, but they were on the right path. With Billy no longer lashing out on the young girl or attempting to treat her in a controlling, domineering fashion, and she, no longer timidly taking his crap anymore.

But underneath all of that, the two cared deeply for each other. Not that they would admit it.

"That your friend?" The Hargrove boy asked, nodding towards the smiling tall girl who stood beside another girl who was about Max's age.

Following his gaze from across the parking lot, Max found that he was leering at Jean. "Why do you care?" She sassily rebutted after

looking back at him to see his annoyed expression. She in fact knew the reason he was interested in the beautiful redhead, the same why he was with all of the girls he hung out with.

"I don't." Gritting his teeth, jaw locked, Billy rounded the car to get into the driver's seat.

"Okay." Max rolled her eyes, standing by the passenger door.

"Get in, you're late as it is." Billy said in a bored voice.

On the way home, Jean was absolutely quiet, contemplating the events of earlier in her head.

After they'd arrived to the cabin and entering the bedroom, El, who'd kept glancing at the restless Jean, finally broke the silence. "Are you.. okay?"

"Yeah, sure." Jean cooed, while her head was bombarded with thoughts and concerns. A lot had went down in the span of an afternoon.

The perplexed girl kept looking in Eleven's direction, contemplating on whether or not to tell her. The younger girl had been nothing but kind to her, and she really did want to help her, and God knew she needed all the help she could get. "Actually.." She trailed, grabbing El's attention. "Earlier, I did something."

"Did what?"

"I think I- I think that I was the one who shattered that glass window." She confessed. Earlier when they were about to leave, the group of kids saw an employee flabbergasted as the glass broke for no reason, but eventually shrugged it off as the summer heat. Which didn't make sense in the slightest.

"How?" Asked El, dark brows lifting slightly.

"Y'know, like.. With my mind.."

*God I sound crazy.*

A bright grin soon took over Eleven's face before she ran to the redhead to give her a hug. "...I knew you could do it."

Jean, slightly taken aback by El's affectionate action, gently patted her back, giggling as she did. It was obvious as daylight that the shorter girl longed to connect with Jean over this particular thing. "Let's not get carried away, I'm still not sure."

With Eleven's large smile on her face, Jean knew she didn't even listen to her.

"Hey, El," The green eyed girl began speaking once again after the two settled on the bed. "I heard voices, too." She confessed.

"Voices? What kind of...voices?" Confusion marrying her features, El hesitantly asked.

"Like, voices inside people's minds. I could hear them thinking or something." She explained, becoming distraught as she tried to put it into words. "It was...intense."

"Intense?" El repeated, not quite getting what she'd meant.

"Yeah, like way too much to handle."

"I can help." After softly inhaling, her shoulders rising as she did, El soothed.

"How?" Jean incredulously asked.

"Practice." El smiled.

Jean returned the grin, but hers only showed concern.

She didn't care to mention the visions that had intruded her mind prior to the thought reading incident. Ones she'd had about astronauts and spaceships. It was like trying to remember a dream, the more she tried the more vague it all became. Maybe that's what it all was; an old dream, after all how would she have gone to space.

Jean also chose to not speak or think of the encounter she had at the car park in her state of panic earlier. She could still vividly remember



how her skin had felt under the handsome guy's strong and confident gaze.

The redhead shook her head, attempting to clear all thoughts of the boy, and she successfully did.

Because she had bigger things to worry about.

**A/N:-**

***I hope you guys are enjoying the story so far!***

***These are the links to the story's trailers: Enjoy!***

<https://youtu.be/K9ouc1PhLEM>

<https://youtu.be/K9ouc1PhLEM>

## 5. CHAPTER 4

### Chapter 4: Cool It, Hairspray

A WEEK has passed since the incident at the arcade.

After Jean established the fact that she had abilities, Hopper became even more clueless as to how to deal with the situation, but he knew for a fact that calling Dr. Owens; a man working for the government, wasn't for the girl's best interest.

The older man kindly offered her to stay until she managed to remember anything from her past, or at least she could function on her own. He just couldn't risk her being recaptured by whoever did this to her.

Rigorous practice ensued, endless stares and attempts at moving objects from far away came to no fruition at Eleven's guidance. So El thought of another method.

"Okay, focus."

"Don't you kids have studying to do?" Jean asked the group of teens that comprised of Mike, Lucas, Max, Dustin, Will, and of course, El. They'd all come over after school to 'help' her.

"I said *focus*." Mike repeated, slightly on edge with the lack of results.

"Jeez, don't be so cranky." Jean teased the frowning younger boy, occasionally glancing at El who was smiling encouragingly at her.

Eleven relied on her friends' help; despite being the only one among them with abilities, she was the least capable of explaining on how to do these thing, because they came so naturally to her.

The party believed they got this covered and that it would be easy to help her train, due to their infinite knowledge of superheros and comic books. But it has shown to be rather difficult.

"Just try to move the pen." Lucas insisted in a commanding tone.

As per instructions, Jean Grey brought her green eyes to stare at the pen that rested on the dinning table. She narrowed her eyes in focus, trying to will the object to move. Still, nothing happened.

"Is anything happening?" Jean sarcastically asked, noticing that her attempts were futile.

"Keep trying." Dustin urged, his fingers resting against his chin.

"But I don't-"

"Think about how you want it to move." Mike added.

"Okay, okay, but do I stare really hard? Am I supposed to...move my hand?" The whole process was alien to her, but after a long period of trying, Jean managed to find the humor in the situation. So she laughed at her own question, Max quickly joining her from where she sat across the table.

After the laughter slowly ceased, the younger orange haired girl felt goosebumps creeping the back of her neck, so she turned around, surprised to see El glaring at her. The two girls weren't close, it was no lie. Maxine never understood why Eleven disliked her from the very beginning, but after a while they became a bit... friendly but still not as Max had hoped at first. Now she didn't know why El was being hostile all over again. Little did she know, it was because she was being territorial over Jean, just like she was with Mike.

Unnoticing the tension that draped over the other two girls, Jean let out another short chortle. "I look and feel ridiculous."

"Just *keep* trying."

Face scrunched at their persistence, Jean released a playful hiss. "You guys are super invested in this. *Why?*"

Mike knew his reason, looking to El who stood on his right, to put her mind at ease, he'd promised to help the redhead and he would. "We're just trying to help you, Jean. You can't give up that easily, it's not right."

"Also, it would be awesome to not have one, but *two* friends with

superpowers." Blurted Dustin, earning glares from his friends. He didn't pay them much attention because he knew they were thinking the same. With El who was in complete control of her abilities, Jean who struggled to get a grasp over her powers, and them as the backup team, he felt like they were the X-men.

"Maybe..if you gain control of your powers, you'd be able to get your memories back." Will Byers meekly spoke from the background, promoting Jean to look back the shy boy. She hadn't thought it of it like that, maybe he was right. But the truth remained that she was in no way telekinetic.

Realizing how reluctant the older girl had become, Mike thought to change on a different side. "Okay... How about we focus on another ability. You told El you heard what people were thinking at the arcade, right?"

"She can read minds?! How in the shit am I just hearing about this?" Dustin yelled, his excitement gushing with his high voice.

"Cool it, Jeez." Max rolled her eyes, having known after Jean had personally told her. She, too was fascinated by the revelation, but now wasn't a time to freak and yell.

A skeptical look arose on Lucas' face. "Okay, what am I thinking now?"

"I'd rather not say."

"Then you *must* be lying."

"Fine," Smirking smugly with her chin resting on the palm of her hand, elbow supported on the table, Jean looked over to the hat-wearing boy. "He broke your limited edition C-3PO action figure."

Dustin's eyes grew wide, and he shrieked as he remembered his damaged Star Wars 4-inch action figure. "What?!"

Lucas made a face, after realizing that he was busted. "Oops."

"You blamed Mews Jr. when it was you?!"

"I'm sorry, okay?" He sighed, a part of him relieved to get this out of his chest.

"Don't worry, it was an accident." Jean cooed, the two boys ignoring her.

"You lied! I blamed that poor cat for months!"

'*She really does read minds*' Will thought in awe, despite watching his friends bickering, he had a small smile on his face. And to his surprise, her green eyes turned to him.

"Yes, I do." She replied to the quiet boy, grinning widely at Will.

"ALRIGHT!" Mike, being their party leader, yelled out to stop their fight and the two fell silent.

"At least now, we know for sure that she's a telepath." He stated.

"So we just work on it?" Max asked, Jean groaning at her inquiry.

"Yes." Was Mike's declaration.

A frustrated sigh fell from Jean Grey's lips.

Despite all of the teens' help, Jean found that she wasn't progressing at all. She believed it was partially because she didn't *understand* those abilities. How was she able to do the things that she did? What was their source? And why her in specific? They were all questions no one could answer, not even Eleven.

Eleven had explained to her that there were others just like them. And while she couldn't explain how to control them, El said that her own abilities were somewhat linked to her emotional state, being at their strongest when influenced by her anger and fear. And somehow unlike Jean, using her powers took a physical toll on her body. When using her powers to perform more tasks, Eleven usually suffered from nosebleeds.

So the red haired amnesic decided to research her 'condition'. Perhaps the more she understood it, the less it will control her.

That's what brought her into the Hawkins school library.

She had arrived early morning, and found a table near the back drenched in the sunlight, which warmed her exposed arms. The library was blissfully quiet and rather empty this afternoon.

Jean's red tresses were brought to the side to lie on her left shoulder as she was seated, hands resting lightly on a desk on which a large number of books and pieces of paper covered its surface.

Reading books like; *The Conscious Universe: The Scientific Truth of Psychic Phenomenon*, and *Telekinesis: Analysis and Aftermath* has somehow proven useful to the red haired girl.

For some reason, her brain could assimilate and process impossibly huge amounts of raw data in a astonishingly short amount of time.

After spending all morning and afternoon cooped up in the closed space, Jean decided to call it a day and head out.

Jean blended into the crowd rather seamlessly as she walked out of the library and across the courtyard leading to the carpark. She was finally dressed in clothes that actually fit her. Mike -after telling his sister that Hopper's relative had her suitcase stolen- brought her Nancy's old clothes. Apparently, his sister was already set on donating the clothes to make room for the new 'professional' wardrobe she bought for her exciting upcoming summer internship.

Jean was grateful, even though some of the outfits were too short for her due to her tall stature, they worked far better than the baggy clothes she used to wear. Now, she no longer stood out like a sore thumb.

It was no secret that Dustin Henderson enjoyed the company of Jean. He thought she was really cool, amnesia and all. A mystery to be solved. Also she was really pretty.

So when he knew that she would be coming to the library near their school, he rushed to see her after hours -despite it making him late for AV club. "You sure that you don't need me to borrow the books you need for you?" Dustin asked Jean after properly greeting her. It

was obvious when Jean exited the place with only a notebook hugged closely to her chest that she wasn't able to take any of the books home, due to her lacking a student ID.

"No, I'm good. Thanks, Dustin." Jean's cheeks notched upwards with her own matching smile.

"Yeah, well, what if you need to look them over at home." He retorted.

"It's okay, I remember them clearly so I don't need to."

"You *'remember'* them?" He repeated, perplexity blinking on his featuring.

Jean gave a sharp nod. "I can recall the pages from memory after only seeing it once." She explained, she could remember the pages in so much detail, clarity, and accuracy that it was as though they were still being perceived to her at the moment.

Stopping in his tracks, Dustin let out a shriek. "Holy shit! Are you telling me that you have an eiditic memory?"

"I think so." She replied, ceasing her walking to look back at the younger boy.

*'Isn't that ironic'*, Dustin thought. She could remember things with a single glance but had trouble recalling her past, that was rather ironic.

"Hey!" She yelled with a fake offended look, there was a playful note in her voice that reached her eyes.

"Sorry. Well, take my advice, the Downtown Hawkins Public Library has a way better collection on parapsychology books and articles than this shithole." Dustin said.

Jean appreciated the advice, she'd found only a couple of books on Parapsychology; the study of mental phenomena which were excluded from or inexplicable by orthodox scientific psychology. "Thanks, I'll keep that in mind."

Expecting to elicit a smile, or a 'you're welcome' from the boy, Jean looked over to Dustin when she caught a glimpse of his eyes widening.

"STEVE!" Dustin screamed out as he crossed the carpark to stand before him, his backpack sliding down from one of his shoulders; one of the zippers falling open.

The guy, Steve, stood by a car -a burgundy BMW to be exact- his brown hair was styled perfectly to reach an impressive height. And his dark green sweater outlined his lean frame perfectly. A wide smile worked his lips as he clocked Dustin. "Henderson!" Steve greeted back.

Awkwardly just standing there for a moment, Jean walked towards the two after she saw them perform a long special handshake, delightful laughter rumbling in their chests.

Dustin looked between the two tall people, realized that he needed to introduce them. "Steve, this is the girl I told you about." Dustin lowly muttered, scratching his cheeks to conceal his moving mouth. It was weird, like he didn't want Jean to hear and she obviously did.

Steve Harrington's eyes were widening slowly as recognition flashed in them. "*Oh shit!* Is she the one with superpowers?" He asked, a bit too loud for Dustin's liking.

The boy felt guilt washing over him after he noted the accusing look Jean shot him. "I'm sorry, okay? I tell him everything." After the events of last year, Steve has become a proper ally to the main party, especially Dustin. The boys quickly bonded, and Steve has shown to have a more parental or mentoring side towards the kid. They were really close friends.

Dustin's smile fell when he raised his arm to see what time it was on his wristwatch. "Holy shit! I'm super late to AV. Bye!" Without any warning, the teen left in a flurry, both Jean and Steve surprised at his speed.

An awkward silence draped over the two. They were practically strangers, so they didn't know what to speak of.



After standing there for a whole minute, Steve broke the silence. "Soo, how are you liking Hawkins so far?" He lamely asked, berating himself at the stupid question.

"Uhh," The corners of the redhead's lifted as she contemplated her answer. "It's good, I guess?"

Steve's lips stretched into a large, somewhat awkward grin as the two of them stared at each other. He didn't know what he could ask her that wouldn't be too insensitive regarding her situation.

The teen's smile fell, a dejected look took its place as he heard a girl - standing a few meters away from them- yelling and shouting in excitement and pure bliss to her friends, saying how she 'got in' to the college she'd applied to.

Well at least he had his hair, products and all, he attempted to comfort himself but wincing upon trying. An array of emotions washed over him like a tidal wave, he just hoped that his expression didn't give him away too much.

He didn't know that Jean could read his thoughts.

She looked at him, feeling a weight settle on her chest and a knot bending in her stomach as she gazed at his face, which was scrunched in sullen defeat. "I'm sorry." She had just unintentionally barged into his head, and once she did, she didn't just hear his thoughts. Jean could feel what he'd felt. It was like she'd formed a psychic link for that brief moment.

What Jean said snapped Steve out of his daze, he turned his head to her and sent the girl an inquisitive look. *What an earth is she sorry for?* Steve thought to himself.

"I know this feels like the end of the world, but it will all work out. You don't have to go to college to do something meaningful with your life." She said in a comforting manner.

Stupefaction added to the range of emotions on his face. "How did you-"

"I'm telepathic, I read minds, apparently." Jean replied, slightly

smiling to herself. It still felt weird coming out of her mouth.

Once he understood what it meant, Steve felt embarrassed to be exposed in such vulnerable and fragile state. "Well, stay out of mine!" He snapped. "Alright, I don't need some freak creeping around my head."

Jean's gentle facial expression was soon replaced by a hardened one, as if she was attempting to hide whatever emotion that lay beneath it.

Steve immediately regretted what he'd said the moment he said it. He wanted to apologize, but was intercepted by the redhead.

"Don't worry, *Farah Fawcett*, there's not much to see." She said with an air of nonchalance, but hurt by his insult deep down. She turned abruptly and quickly walked away.

Steve Harrington didn't know how to react as he stood there, jaw dropped in astonishment. He had only disclosed his hair-styling secret; Farrah Fawcett hairspray, to Dustin, but strictly stated not to reveal it to anyone.

*'Did that little shthead tell her?!'*

"No, he didn't!" Jean, refusing to look back, yelled enough to make sure he heard her. And she left the area with a smirk.

A very irritated Jean was seated alone on a bench, chin rested on her palm, and slender finger tapping on the table.

As she tried to empty her head of the insult she's received from that 'Steve', Jean thought of her abilities as an alternative. She found that her telepathy was something far more complicated than she thought. Controlling it wasn't going to be an easy thing to do; the fact being that when a person near her was at a peak of an emotional state, she was practically dragged into their head, linked even. The proof was the incredulous amount of frustration and sadness she'd felt when the fluffy haired dude thought about all of his college rejections.

Jean looked up from the bench once a gruff voice snapped her of her thoughts. "Hey,"

The green eyed girl gazed at a blonde guy, who looked oddly familiar. "Hi?" She returned the greeting, wondering why he so readily sat beside her. "I'm sorry, can I help you?" Jean asked, suspicion lacing in her tone.

Taking in her extremely confused state, the mullet guy looked offended for a brief second, wondering how she couldn't remember him. But nonetheless gave her a charming grin. "I'm Billy, we met at the arcade a couple of days ago."

Recognition flashed across her face, looking down briefly in slight embarrassment before glancing up at him again. "Yeah I remember now."

"What are you doing here, anyway? Thinking of transferring?" Billy asked, his thumb brushing over his bottom lip as he dragged his pale eyes down her body and the blue jeans and striped long sleeve shirt she was wearing. Jean squirmed in her seat on the bench. "Um, no, I was just visiting the library."

"Uh-huh." He trailed off, nodding slowly with a smirk on his lips. "So where you from?"

"Uhh-" Jean's eyes widened at the unexpected inquiry. Hopper had told her to pretend to be his relative, visiting for the summer, but he never provided a backstory further than that. "New York.." She hesitantly replied, saying the very first place that came to mind.

Little did she know, it really was where she came from. Just not this New York city though, but another one.

"You?" Jean asked, watching to the handsome Billy Hargrove. She, unintentionally, heard his thoughts that were along the lines of, 'still not a match to where he was from'.

"California." Billy leaned forward, bringing himself closer to Jean and completely invading her space. "Now how'd you know I'm not from around here?" He asked, his smirk still decorating his face.

"Lucky guess...I guess."

Billy looked around the now empty car parking zone, everyone

scurrying home after they said their goodbyes. "You waiting for someone?" He asked her.

Jean nodded. "Yeah, actually I'm waiting for my...uncle to take me home. He's running late."

Billy had noticed something in Jean, she wasn't like the other girls at his school, who smiled all smitten, eyelashes blinking and cheeks flushed. In fact, she barely even looked at him (because she had a lot of things in mind, but he didn't know that).

That made her even more of a challenge, and boy did he love a good challenge.

"I could give you a ride, if you want."

Shaking her head, Jean denied his offer. "You don't have to, but thanks anyway."

"I know that I don't have to, I want to."

With a slam of his palms on the surface of the table, Billy got up and stomped away.

Noticing that she still wasn't following him, half-turned he gestured for her to join him. "C'mon."

She reluctantly agreed.

"Are you hopping in, or what? I don't bite, dollface." He rebutted, after getting into the driver's seat, he saw that she was still standing by the navy blue car.

And with great hesitation, Jean slid into his Camaro, doom and heat swirling in her blood.

Billy's Camaro roared to life and he revved the engine a few times before easing off the brakes and putting the pedal to the metal.

Wind rushed in through the windows as he started to drive, and Jean let out a huff as she fought against the red hair that tangled in her face. Billy was speeding along the road and didn't slow down as they

reached the center of the town, the small businesses of Hawkins now seemed more abandoned than ever, the colors dull and washed out. They passed the public library and Jean made a mental note to visit it as soon as she could.

The blonde boy noticed how as he increased his car speed over the limit, Jean didn't complain or nervously giggle in fear that they might crash or get caught, much like the other girls did. So as to elicit a response from the fiery redhead, he went a little faster.

"Too fast for ya?" He taunted, glancing in her direction after he heard her breath hitching in her throat.

"No, I'm good." She shook her head briefly, a smirk displayed on her features. She actually loved the feeling, the thrill. It was honestly the most exciting thing she's been through ever since... well, since she could remember.

The boy's face had a smirk to match.

After a bit, Billy looked over the confined space of his Camaro to Jean. "So where do you know Harrington from?" He asked before turning on the radio.

Loud heavy metal music roared from the car's stereo, it warred against the strength of the wind so much so that Jean had to yell over the domineering sounds. "Who?!" She asked, confusion blinking across her face.

"Harrington?" He repeated. "The guy you were talking to before." He said, almost growling in remembrance of the past King of Hawkins High.

Shortly after his arrival in Hawkins, Billy started a rivalry with Steve, surpassing him and claiming his title as "King" of the high school. And later on, their rivalry turned violent when Billy discovered that Steve was trying to prevent him from seeing Max.

Earlier, when Jean was talking to Steve in the parking lot, Billy Hargrove was resting up against his car talking with a girl in a manner that was far from platonic. And with fate working against

him, Billy had looked away from the nameless girl and saw Jean, the girl who'd ditched him for a group of kids, speaking with Steve Harrington and exchanging smiles. His interest dropping, Billy dismissed the girl and she walked away with a malicious glare.

"Oh, Steve?" She asked after realizing who he was talking about. "We'd just met."

"Huh." Was all Billy muttered as he focused on the road.

With a small scoff, Jean wondered why he looked like he didn't believe her. It wasn't his business in the first anyway. "What?"

"It just looked like you two got along is all." He said in reply.

"Trust me, we don't. He's an asshole."

At what she'd said, a cocky grin curled on Billy's lips. *'That he is.'*

"Take a left this way." She exclaimed. Worry washed over her when he drove past the turn, ignoring what she'd said. "What are you doing?" She asked, green eyes glancing to him.

"Just have to make a quick stop somewhere." He announced in a relaxed voice, his hands twisting the steering wheel onto a lane she didn't recognize- granted she barely even went out to figure out this small town's roads.

Jean was anxious at that moment, but didn't protest because she was only hitching a ride from the guy.

Once he pulled up at a diner, Billy stopped the car and went out. He walked around the car to get to the passenger seat and knock on its windows, once he saw Jean was unmoving.

This stop had shifted into a date territory, Jean thought. She wasn't arrogant enough as to assume he did all of this only to especially bring her here. But still, concern and irritation were sneaking into her blood. She knew this was a bad idea. I mean, she barely even knew the guy.

"I'll just stay here."

"Should I leave the window cracked for you while I'm at it?" He smirked devilishly at her, his words shining with his sense of humor. Did he just compare her to a dog?

"It'll be a while, come on."

Jean rolled her eyes, turning her gaze to the half-open window that rapidly whipped air into her face. "Okay..."

The small diner was somewhat empty, no one greeting the pair as they entered the grim looking place. Billy guided her to one of the many free tables near the back.

White sun rays shone through window and curtain just the same, Jean observed, looking around the place. While Billy went straight for the laminated menu that rested on the table after he got rid of his denim jacket.

"Get whatever, okay? It's on me." Billy's voice smoothly rolled off his tongue, his eyes briefly lifting from the menu to spy on Jean sitting across from him.

However, Jean took a different approach and raised her shapely brows in question. "This was your errand?"

Billy just grinned at her as if he had the devil inside of him.

**A/N:-**

***Hey, you guys. I hope you're enjoying the story thus far. What do you think of it? I would love to read your comments!***

***Also, is it just me, or do Billy and Steve remind you of some people in the X-men?***

***Because to me, the sweet supportive Steve Harrington is like a Scott Summers. Billy is like the troubled Logan with the dark past.***

***And welp, Jean is stuck in the middle of a love triangle all over again haha***

## 6. CHAPTER 5

### Chapter 5: The Unexpected Act

**JIM** Hopper had no clue how to deal with one but with two teenage girls living under his roof. Both of which possessing supernatural abilities and one suffering from amnesia.

Thinking that Eleven was in the comfort of the cabin, and Jean in the school's library yet again, Hopper went on his lunch break with his mind at ease- well, as eased as it could get with the given situation.

He didn't usually leave the office at this time, only on occasions visiting Joyce and like today, going out to eat at Benny's. The place was previously owned by his deceased friend Benny Hammond -may he rest in peace- and now it was under new management.

He was...flabbergasted to see Jean at the diner, and *not* alone. She was sitting nice and cozy with a blonde guy who donned a mullet. Despite his muscled up body, Hopper knew with one look that he was a high school kid.

When he had approached the two, Jean looked slightly taken aback to see him, while the guy just smirked smugly at him. That kid was definitely not a company a father wanted his daughter to keep. But unlike Eleven, she *wasn't* his daughter. Sure she was a sweet kid, but he knew almost to nothing about her except for her name and the fact that she was 'gifted' -in her defense neither did she.

So when Jim asked her if she needed a ride home, he did do so as politely as he could, unknowing of the boundaries and amount of dominance he was supposed to assert on the girl. And to his mild surprise, she grinned brightly and scampered out of her seat to follow him, grateful to see him. It was the exact opposite reaction he got from Eleven whenever he barged in on her and Mike; the fourteen year old would groan, roll her eyes at him and at sometimes even use her powers in response to his yelling.

Jim had to resist with every fiber of his being from sending a taunting smirk towards that mullet kid.



He failed.

The car ride back home was silent for the two, Hopper wondering who that boy was, but clueless as to how he could ask .

"It wasn't a date, he just offered me a ride home." Jean blurted out of nowhere.

Somewhat relieved, Jim's grip on the steering wheel was loosening a bit as he gazed on the road. "I didn't ask."

"Yeah, but you were thinking it." Jean said, smugness fluttering in her tone.

Scratch that. She was just like El.

It was yet another day that Jean spent in the library.

She wanted, nay, *needed* to understand her powers, to find answers to the questions that even Eleven didn't know the answers to. She believed that if she were to comprehend what she was, and how to control her abilities, it would be the key to unlocking her memories.

So she read all the documented articles of research regarding the study of alleged psychic phenomena; extrasensory perception, as in telepathy, precognition, clairvoyance, psychokinesis, a.k.a. telekinesis, and psychometry, and other paranormal claims. They proved to be quite useful, informing her of the endless capabilities that the human mind could be able to accomplish. She just needed to understand how to go about tuning out the noise in the back of her head, the whispers that proved to be what others were thinking. If El hadn't informed her that this was possible, the redhead would've assumed that the voices were coming from her own mind, and that she was insane.

"Hey." Out of nowhere, someone abruptly sat across from her on the table, the wooden surface bustling at the movement. Jean's heart jolted in her chest before she even looked up from her page. Her green eyes narrowed to find out it was none other than Steve Harrington.

"What are you doing here?" Jean's underlying tone was somewhat

hostile, and he did not blame her.

"Dustin told me you were here." Was his answer. He stated it like it was the most obvious thing in the world. Jean's eyebrows furrowed at him.

"You two have a weird bond."

"Well, *duh*, he's my main guy." He humorously replied, but was speaking the truth. In the attempt to catch Dart, the lizard from hell, Steve and Dustin had formed an unlikely strong friendship that seemed to only grow with time.

A soft rumble of laughter vibrated through her chest, and the boy chuckled, as well. He was starting to feel relieved to find that she wasn't as angry with him as he first perceived.

One of the library dwellers sent the two a glare for disrupting the quiet environment, shushing them as he did.

"Oh, shit." Steve muttered, averting his gaze and looking down at the table, slightly ashamed. 'Sorry', he mouthed after he glanced up again.

Once the fluffy haired boy saw the curiosity re-emerging on Jean's face, he quickly began to explain the reason for his appearance. "I came to-um," He felt weirdly nervous under her gaze, with her translucent green eyes on him. "I came to apologize for what I said."

The red haired girl's smile became strained until it completely faded, recalling the incident. "You don't have to, I mean you were right." She had been upset with what he said because it had hit so close to home. Her amnesia and telepathy and god knows what else all helped in her categorization as a 'freak' per Steve's words.

The Harrington boy's large brown eyes widened even further, he vigorously shook his head, regretting what he'd said the other day even more. She was only trying to make him feel better at the time and he snapped at her, taking out all of his frustration on the poor girl.

"What? No!" His words of denial were loud enough for him to get

shushed again, but this time by the librarian, Melissa.

"No, no, I wasn't, okay? I was angry and I didn't mean what I said. *I'm sorry.*" He said, now in a low voice in consideration to the people around them.

*Maybe he wasn't an asshole, after all,* Jean thought. Steve was just hurting at the time and just used the wrong outlet, but he regretted it now.

Relief draped over Steve like a cold breeze on a hot summers day, his remorseful look slowly dissipating as he gazed at the smiling of facet of the girl. He had to admit, there was something entrancing about the way her eyes crinkled as she grinned at him.

"Well, I'm sorry, too. It was presumptuous of me to say what I said. I didn't mean to read your thoughts because I can't control it just yet, but I'll try my best to get out of your head." She said. Jean felt she was partially at fault, it was an invasion of his privacy, even if she didn't mean to.

"No, no, no. Look, I was super sensitive about it. I just-" He paused, the negative feelings creeping up on him. It was a harsh lesson he'd learnt for free; no one was entitled to anything. As a rich popular guy who had everything pretty much handed to him -being unable to get into any school he applied to- that was a very hard pill to swallow.

"I didn't actually *tell* anyone. Like my parents are the only ones who know - as disappointed as they are.." He was rambling, and he didn't know what he was saying to a girl he'd just met.

Perhaps it was that she'd already delved into his mind and saw what he was most ashamed of. Steve was sure that he'd have no confidence to tell anyone. Even if he was still dating Nancy, he was sure he'd be too scared to tell her in fear that she'd think less of him.

To be honest, it was a relief; to finally talk about a topic he'd been bottling up for a so long.

"Don't worry, I won't tell anyone if that's what you're worried about." She softly said, and saw how his dark eyes widened slightly,

indicating to her that she'd missed his point.

"That's not what I meant-" He sighed dejectedly. "I, y'know I just- I don't know what to do with myself now. I'm clueless."

After saying so, he regretted it. Steve cursed himself for dumping his baggage on the girl. The soon to be high-school graduate was expecting her to just stare at him, or nod awkwardly and pretend he didn't say anything. Even make a snarky comment, perhaps, he didn't know.

What would you do if a stranger (who'd insulted you once) started complaining about their future- or lack thereof- to you?

"It's okay." Unconsciously, Jean raised one of her hands and placed it on top of Steve's, which was on the wooden surface of the table. Her touch was comfortable and warm. "I'm sure everyone feels this way at some point in their lives." Jean soothed with a shimmer of hope in her eyes. She related with him, certainly feeling the same way at this very moment. Being amnesic, not having a clue where to go from there, it was all too much for her to handle.

But she'd made a decision to try and exert her best to remember; to understand what she was capable of, what her limitations were. And Jean was sure, she *hoped* that she would someday. And even if she couldn't -god forbid- she wanted to at least be able to function normally in society.

No one thought of it, but it was rather ironic. Jean was the one who suffered from a far more intense predicament at hand, and *she* was consoling him.

"You'll have plenty of opportunities to redeem yourself. You can end up getting even more motivated from the rejection, y'know." Jean's words were breezy, her voice calm.

Steve didn't know if was it the gentle touch or her voice, but he felt the anxiety leaving him, like poison being drained. He smiled at her, content to just feel her skin for a minute.

"In fact," Jean started, taking her hand away from his, and he

immediately missed the contact. She rummaged through the mess of the books splayed on the desk and smiled in content when she'd found what she was looking for. "Here, read this. It's my favorite." It was a book that housed a quote by Calvin Coolidge.

Steve moved from his spot, he took the book from the redhead and unraveled the page she'd marked. Steve's fingers smoothed out the surface of the paper, his brown irises skimmed the words quickly. Jean noticed he was reading it over a couple of times because of his lips, which moved softly as he silently read the written words.

*"Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent."*

"Wow." That was all he could say.

Once the brown haired boy was done sweeping the words with his eyes, he looked up from the small book that he had in his hands, which he reached out to Jean, indicating that he was done reading it.

The red-haired girl took it between her slender fingers, gently brushing Steve's and closed it.

"That uhh, that was actually pretty helpful. Thanks." Steve exclaimed, grateful towards the girl who somehow managed to lift his spirits in no time.

Jean nodded, delighted that she could make him feel a bit better. "Anytime." She stated, sending Steve a dazzling smile.

A comfortable silence instilled between the two, much to the library's attendees delight. After staring at Jean for a while, Steve gulped nervously.

A short stutter left Steve before he spoke correctly. "D-Do you.. I don't know uhh- Wanna grab a cup of coffee or something?" He asked, his voice a bit out of tune. It's been a *really really really* long time since he asked a girl out. Heck, Steve barely hung out with anyone his age

anymore.

Jean appreciated the offer, she truly did, but as her green eyes glanced up at the clock hanging on the wall across from her, she realized it was about time to head back home.

*Home.* She didn't know if it was okay to call the cabin that. In only a matter of two weeks, she and El had gotten incredibly close to each other, the girls spending most of their days and nights talking and laughing. Eleven felt like a little sister to her. Even Hopper, as gruff and emotionally reserved as he was at first, grew to be highly sympathetic and responsible for her. And Jean, dare she say it, regarded him as a father figure.

"Sorry, I can't right now."

"Oh..." Steve muttered in disappointment, a dejected look on his face.

It was no news that the previous ladies man, cocky *Hair-ington* was long gone. And now even though it wasn't an actual date or anything, he had difficulty asking her out. After his falling out with Nancy, failing to get into college, oh and having fought interdimensional monsters with a group of kids, Steve became a shadow of what he once was.

So, he wasn't surprised when this sweet, beautiful girl outflat rejected him.

However, what she'd said next managed to brighten his day.

"But maybe some other time."

Grinning widely, Steve nodded. "Oh, yeah, yeah. Sure." He exclaimed, trying (and failing) to sound as cool as possible and to mask his enthusiasm.

Getting up from the chair and grabbing her stuff, Jean smiled, giving him a small wave. "I'll see you around."

"Yeah, okay..." Steve nodded, watching her walk away. He was in such a daze that he practically yelled, "Bye!"

After getting shushed for the third time, Steve rolled his eyes before running a hand through his perfect brown hair.

## 7. CHAPTER 6

### Chapter 6: The Social Occasion

**SITTING** silently at the dining table was Jean, playing with her fork. Hopper was on her left, with Eleven to her right, the two across from each other.

At the beginning, the dinner was lighthearted, but as the redhead posed a statement, it became awkward and full of tension.

"A party?" Jim repeated, his questioning eyes radiated a small level of intimidation as he looked at Jean.

With a nod, the green eyed teen answered. "Yeah."

Earlier this noon, a very nervous Steve had called, stating that he got the cabin's number from one of the kids -presumably Dustin. The brown haired nineteen year old exclaimed that there was a party a fellow senior of his was having the next day, and he was wondering if she'd be interested as to come along. Jean told him she'd think about it.

So when she declared the news to Hop, she swore she could see a vein popping on his forehead.

"And who will be going to this *'party'*?"

"People my age?" Jean rebutted.

Eleven, who'd been sitting quietly, staring at the two, spoke hopefully. "Can I come?"

"No." Mid-bite, Jim turned to his adopted daughter, and pointed his fork her way with a matter of fact expression. "Eat your carrots, okay?"

Eleven huffed, pouting slightly as she complied.

A sigh of frustration fell from Jean's lips as she stared at the dinner table.



"Will that guy with the mullet be there?" Jim hissed through clenched teeth, his words dripping with dislike towards that smirking son of a bitch.

Jean didn't blame him.

"You mean Billy?"

"Oh, so he does have a name." Hopper raised his dirty blonde brows, mockery entangled in his tongue.

Jean rolled her eyes at the older man. "I don't know if he's coming or not, I barely even know him."

*'Then why were you having lunch with him?'*

Uncontrolled by her, Hopper's thoughts resonated in the mind of the currently very frustrated teen. Dropping her utensils on the plate, Jean Grey crossed her arms in front of her chest. "Look, as much as I enjoy being cooped up here, I won't be able to form any sense of self or remotely remember anything if I stay here all the time." She logically spoke, while Jim just stared at her.

After a good minute, Jean broke the silence. "So..can I go?" She asked, her green eyes hopeful.

"Are you asking for my permission?" Jim's facial expression and tone failed to hide his mild surprise. As before when he'd caught her with *Billy*, Jim didn't really know how much authority he had on the redhead. He cared for her sure, that was why he was asking all of these questions. But if she said she was going, he wouldn't have been able to stop her.

She looked debative to herself, glancing between El and Hopper. "Well...yeah."

Seemingly, he was pleased with her answer, a ghost of a smile on his lips. "Fine, you can go. But be home early." Hopper exclaimed. The serious and raspy tone of his voice returned to flutter in his tongue. "How are you gonna get there?"

"Someone's picking me up."

"Who?" He asked, tone rising a bit.

"A guy."

*Oh here we go.*

"His names's Steve Harrington." She declared, watching his face flash with recognition.

"Huh..." He nodded, feeling relieved. "Yeah, he's a good kid, I guess."

*And easy to intimidate*, Hopper thought.

"Is Mike coming over tonight?" Jean asked Eleven who was sprawled over the bed.

El hummed in answer.

The telepath stood in front of her mirror. Well, it was Eleven's technically- everything she owned, the clothes she wore, even, belonged to someone else.

She tried to force a smile as she got ready, but it just seemed strained. *Why was she even going to this?*

At the beginning, Jean had no plans to head to the party Steve had invited her to. She had seamlessly missed any opportunity to leave the house -save for the numbered library visits- every day and night with Eleven, sometimes listening to music on the younger girl's walkman. Now, she had actually put on party appropriate clothing, and was about to head to an event with a multitude of people her age that she had to socialize with.

Jean didn't have a chance to second guess her decision, though. Because Steve was already on his way, following the directions given to him.

A car honked and she rushed out of the room, only pausing to kiss El on the forehead. Jean headed to open the door only to find that Hopper had already done so and invited the reluctant boy in.

"Hey, Hopper." Steve Harrington stood by the threshold to the house,

straightening his dark jacket. Once the brown eyed boy was greeted by a glare from the man with the mustache, Steve gulped nervously. "I-I mean Mr. Hopper."

Jean chortled to see Jim's blue eyes narrowing at the boy, which only elicited a more anxious response from him. "*Chief*, yes Chief Hopper, that's what I meant."

Steve's brown irises then fell on Jean's smiling form. "Hey, Jean."

"Hi, Steve." She gleefully greeted back.

Instantly, Steve took in her appearance and was mesmerized. He let out a deep breath once he got a good look of her. Her luscious long red hair was framing her cheeks and descended in waves down to her waist. She wore a simple camisole and a black jacket on top, a skirt that was short enough to showcase her long legs that went for miles.

"You..You look-"

If he was being honest, when Steve first laid eyes on her, he was actually numbed by such beauty. Firey red hair, red lips, a fair skin. Steve was awestruck, maybe that was why he was so embarrassed when she read his thoughts and found out he didn't get into college.

"Wow."

It was difficult to tear his gaze away from her, but once he did, he found a seething Hopper.

"Have her home by eleven." He commanded, eyes boring into Steve's nervous ones.

"Yes, sir."

Pointing a finger at Steve, the man maintained his intimidating posture. "Not eleven-thirty not eleven-ish. ELEVEN!"

A whoosh sound came from the bedroom door, El's head peaking from it. "Yes?" She softly asked, thinking that they'd called her name.

"Not you, El. I meant eleven o'clock." Rubbing his chin in frustration,

Jim said.

"Oh."

"Hi, El." Steve greeted the girl with a bright grin.

"Hi." She said back, returning the smile.

"Okay," Jean began, walking over to Steve. "Well, I think it's time to go."

She and Steve said bye to El and Hop, who then urged her to be careful and not be late.

Hearing music from afar, Jean knew exactly which house the party was taking place at.

Skillfully, Steve parked his car on the side of the road before climbing out of it.

Jean exited the passenger seat, watching Steve locking his BMW as the chilly night air nipped at her exposed legs.

Shoving the keys into the back pocket his tight pants had, Steve jogged over to Jean, and the two went into the house where the door was wide open. Jean could see a ton of teenagers dancing around; most of them already drunk out of their minds.

As soon as they got inside, the warmth hit her like a brick due to the incredibly large amount of people cooped up in the house. It felt like a sauna and the red haired female was glad she wouldn't be cold throughout the night.

Steve noticed how distraught she was becoming as they maneuvered through the sweaty dancing bodies until they finally reached the kitchen where a free space was available.

Jean headed to the punch bowl right away but was stopped by Steve when she was about to pour the red liquid onto a plastic cup. "Woah, woah! Not the punch." He warned, speaking from experience. "Never drink the punch, it's a thing."

Jean chuckled, wondering why he so strongly objected to the drink. "Okay?" She said, the playful tone matching her crinkled eyes.

"Here, lemme go get you a drink!" With a smile, Steve headed further into the crowd to get something that won't get her drunk out of her mind, and yet still have a small amount of alcohol to allow her to enjoy the party like the rest of the high schoolers.

Left alone, Jean was slightly fidgeting as the music blared around her, looking around her and taking in her surroundings. In some way, she wondered if this was ever her scene before she'd lost her memories.

She huffed upon seeing an all too familiar face, one that belonged to none other than Billy Hargrove. Jean rolled her eyes, she'd hoped she won't encounter him again, but she was obviously not getting her way. And unfortunately for her, as soon as he walked into the room, their eyes met.

When Billy had went through the crowds of drunken teenagers, they immediately gravitated their focus onto him. As he made his way towards her, for a moment, she felt as though all eyes were on her, since they have never seen her before in their lives.

Wolf whistles came from a group of guys on the sidelines, who Jean assumed were encouraging Billy as he approached her. It prompted her to roll her eyes once again.

"If it isn't the girl with fire for hair." Billy mused with a smirk once he reached Jean. "What are you doing here, babe?"

Jean exhaled sharply, there was a familiar heat that pooled in her stomach whenever Billy Hargrove was closeby. "I was invited."

"By who?" He asked. The blonde wanted to thank whoever brought the short skirt-clad unattainable hottie back into his grasp. He was nothing but upset when that old fart in a police uniform -who he presumed to be her uncle- dragged her out. They never got to finish what they started.

"None of your business, that's who." Jean hissed before attempting to

walk away.

Billy let out a throaty chuckle. "Why so feisty all of a sudden?" Catching up to her swiftly and placing his hands firmly on her hips. He whispered into her ear, his hot breath and golden locks tickled on the skin on the nape of her neck. He didn't mind her attitude, in all truth he enjoyed it when girls played hard to get. But he wouldn't get it through his head that she wasn't *playing* any game with him.

"I don't know, maybe because you dragged me to a date without my consent?" Jean squirmed under his touch, untangling herself from him. It may seem silly, but with Jean's own mind playing tricks on her, she didn't want to play games or befriend a manipulative person -not that he was interested in being just 'friends'.

"I assumed you'd be down for it," Billy noted in a smug tone, his lips curling into a cocky grin. "I was just saving time." He said, focusing his pale blue eye on Jean who returned the gaze with an aloof nature.

"How considerate of you."

Billy gave a rough laugh, lighting a cigarette. He blew smoke into her face and her nosed scrunched at the smell. "Listen... There's something I've been meaning to ask." His exclamation's serious and raspy tone caused Jean to raise her eyebrows expectantly.

"Are you a natural redhead..." He asked, a flirtatious grin that would make any other girl in the party swoon, but not Jean. "And can I find out?"

Jean scoffed, rolling her eyes but her heart was shaking at his sexual innuendo.

"You're despicable." She hissed, while her cheeks aflamed against her will.

Billy smirked smugly at her. Abruptly turning, Jean sped away from him, prompting for his smirk to fall.

"Where you going?!"

"Away from you!" She yelled back, without bothering to turn to him.

Finding Steve was proving to be a difficult task, so Jean slowed her pace and took her time to find the taller boy.

"Hi," A girl with brown curly hair and large blue eyes approached her.

"Hey," Jean said in a friendly way, yet unsure why the random girl was speaking to her.

It was Nancy Wheeler.

"You must be Hopper's relative. I've seen you with Mike and his friends at school. I'm Nancy." She'd recognized her upon leaving the library once, that and the fact being that Nancy could spot her own clothes from a mile away. She'd worn that outfit before, not necessarily in the same ensemble, but she'd never looked as good as Hopper's 'relative' did at the very moment. Perhaps it was because of Jean's nice figure and lengthy legs that the whole thing looked completely different. Nancy knew she was pretty, she wasn't arrogant about it, but she knew. Compared to Jean, she felt, maybe for the first time, normal. Completely average. And she imagined most girls in her school would feel like that, or worse, by Jean's side.

"Jean." The redhead said. Once she'd realized she ought to thank the brunette for her kind gesture. "Thank you for the-" She was intercepted by Nancy who shook her head and shrugged.

"Oh, it's no problem. They look better on you than they ever did on me."

"So, how are you liking Hawkins so far?" That was a question Jean had been asked multiple times, one born from the lack of topics to discuss.

"It's not bad, I guess." She answered, smiling politely.

"Jean, thank god, I thought I lost you." Steve suddenly appeared from behind Nancy, and once he was clear to the brunette, Jean saw that they both looked stunned to see each other.

"Steve." Nancy muttered, still recovering from the initial shock of seeing him. The two barely talked ever since their breakup months

ago, sometimes seeing each other in the hallways and exchanging awkward waves. But this was the first time in a long while they've met outside of school.

"Hey, Nance." A tight-lipped smile on his lips, said boy greeted back. He had let her go and accepted their breakup long ago, but he still found it extremely hard talking to her as friends. Since they were never really friends to begin with; starting their romantic relationship from the get go. But still, for the sake of everything they went through -shared trauma and all- they still had to to give it a chance.

"Hi."

Looking between the two, Jean noted that there was an obvious tension between the two of them. "You two know each other?"

Both just nodded robotically, hoping to not get into their story. "Uh huh." Nancy mumbled.

"Where's Jonathan?" Asked Steve, looking around. From the moment they've gotten together, he'd never seen them separated. So he naturally wondered why Nancy would come to a party all by herself.

"He's off getting something to drink."

Hushed whispers consumed the room, but Steve knew they were actually talking about his and Nancy's failed relationship.

With one last awkward nod, Nancy retreated backwards. "I should go check up on him, bye. It was nice meeting you, Jean."

The redhead sent Nancy a wave before turning her head to a now hyperventilating Steve. "Are you okay?" She asked, concerned for the boy.

"What? Yeah, totally." He shook his head, running his hand through his perfect brown hair. "Actually I need some fresh air."

Jean smiled, "I think there's a patio outback, do you wanna go?"

"Yeah, sure." Steve muttered, grateful for the suggestion.



"Well, well, well."

Both Steve and Jean turned, eyes landing on Billy Hargrove taking a drag from his lit cigarette, the end glowing in the darkness of the room.

"I didn't know *King Steve* would be gracing us with his presence." Billy taunted to the brown haired boy, reminding him about his stolen title.

Said male glared at the blonde, venom dripping as he spoke, "Hey, Billy."

Ignoring Steve's forced and irritated greeting, Billy focused all of his attention on Jean who was glancing between the two. "You didn't tell me you came here with *Harrington*." The tone he had when spitting Steve's last name, it was like acid.

"Why would I?" She asked, raising a brow at him. She barely knew him, so why was he so possessive? Did he hate Steve that much?

"Wait, you two know each other?" Harrington asked, surprised at the exchange.

Steve and Billy - exchanging glares- clearly didn't like each other. They were both alpha males, struggling for dominance, Jean just hoped that the testosterone wouldn't complicate the situation.

"Well, we met a couple of times." Shrugging, Jean replied to Steve's question.

"Yeah, Harrington, you got a problem with that?" Billy growled, his tone aimed at provoking an already on edge Steve.

Seeing the two, Jean didn't need her mind reading to figure out how close those tense two were to exchanging punches, so she quickly intervened. "No, no, there's no problem here."

"Why don't you go ahead, I'll catch up with you." She directed towards Steve, who hesitantly nodded with eyes still trained on Billy through swirls of smoke before making his way outside.

Once Steve left, Jean was about to leave and follow suit, but was stopped by the blonde's words. "I thought you said he was an asshole."

Jean shook her head, immediately regretting what she'd said at the time. If she was being honest, she adored how sweet the guy could be. "He's not so bad."

Billy scoffed.

"So, do you need a ride home later?" Billy was suddenly by her side, smelling of nicotine and something spicy. Jean didn't turn to face him, partly because she was still annoyed with him for manipulating her into an unconsented date, and partly because he almost started a fight out nowhere just now.

"I'd rather walk." She insisted, crossing her arms over chest stubbornly. "Plus, Steve's already giving me a ride, so.."

"Whatever." He flicked his still burning cigarette to the ground before swaggering away.

Jean couldn't help but watch his progress back to the center of the party. Raising an eyebrow, she realized the unsettling sex appeal he possessed, what with his pants clinging to the shape of his backside.

She cleared her throat, averting her eyes quickly, and almost shamefully.

The shadows of the night were pressing against them heavily as they were seated on the patio.

Evidently, Steve was still not letting go the topic of Billy Hargrove. "I don't think you should associate with him." He exclaimed, his usually gentle eyes turning sharp.

He had every right to hate him, Billy Hargrove was antagonistic to Steve and quite provocative from the day they met. After Billy's arrival to Hawkins High School, he was quick to gain reputation from the other students and ignited a rivalry with Steve after breaking his keg standing record. Even though Steve didn't bother much about his fame, Billy was always quick to taunt him for his failures, such as

losing against him in basketball and failing to deal with his broken relationship with Nancy.

Ultimately, Steve realized Billy's violent nature when he came to the Byers residence to forcefully take Max and threatened the young boys. This prompted Steve to intervene and a fistfight ensued that left him bruised for months.

"He's bad news, trust me." He explained, his shoulders sagging and eyes turning kind again, and worried.

"I kinda gathered from the mullet." She reasoned with a soft rumble of laughter vibrating through her chest.

From previously made observations, and the current bothered nature of Steve, Jean declared her deduction. "This really isn't your scene, is it?"

At hearing her statement, Steve let out a bitter laugh, snorting at the end. "It used to be."

He shook his head in frustration. "Gosh, to be honest, I don't even know what I'm doing here."

"What do you mean?" Asked Jean, face scrunched.

"Well I figured I'd come to have one last '*hurrah*' before I graduated." He truthfully replied. This was it. The end of King Steve and his high school life as he knew it.

"Don't you still have prom to go to?" Jean asked, she could've sworn of overhearing two girls gushing about the prom dresses they were going to be wearing to the event, and how excited now that it was finally here.

"Nah, I'm not going to that." With a scoff, Steve shook his head. If it had been him from two years ago, he wouldn't even consider the possibility of missing the chance to be crowned 'Prom King', and now he's out flat rejecting the possibility of even going.

"Why?"

He didn't want to be constantly reminded of his failures while the rest of his classmates gushed about their bright future.

"Oh." The telepathic teen muttered, looking down to her shoes in realization. Hearing this, Steve figured out why she suddenly pursed her lips.

"I thought you'd said you wouldn't read my mind without my permission." He asked, wearing a sad smile.

"Unintentional, sorry." She apologized. He assured her that it was fine.

"What about you?" Steve asked, interrupting the momentary silence.

"What *about* me?" Jean asked, curious and confused.

"Have you thought about what you would do... If, you know, you couldn't get your memories back?" Steve questioned, choosing his words carefully. He didn't want to be insensitive as he asked about her future plans.

Surprise blinked into Jean's face. "No, I haven't."

"Oh, *shit*. Sorry, I didn't-"

"No, you had every right to ask." Jean was smiling like a maniac, wondering how clueless she was to her vague future.

She was literally nobody, no memories even after weeks of trying to remember, no paperwork and no past acquaintances, no *family*. She was truly and utterly fucked.

Running her fingers through her long hair, Jean let out a chortle, and bit her lips in amusement. "*Holy shit!* I never even considered it."

Smiling, as well, Steve contemplated if it was alright to place a comforting hand on top of hers, and once he saw how slightly distressed she became, he went for it. "Well, I'm sure you'll figure something out."

Jean gave the slightest flinch when she felt the warmth of his fingers

seeping into her, but she didn't move it. Appreciating the gesture, Jean grinned brightly. She was sure she'd be fine as long she had El, Hopper and maybe a friend like him by her side. "Well, right back at ya." She mused, raising her other hand to place on top of his.

On impulse, Steve made a move that he would immediately regret. He leaned in towards the girl, in an attempt to kiss her. And to his absolute disappointment, she pulled back, eyes as wide as saucers.

"Woah! What are you- Oh, my god." She gasped, the initial shock of what he was about to do still haven't left her. *Was he going to kiss her?*

"Oh, oh! I'm, I'm sorry!"

Shuddering from embarrassment, Steve distanced himself from Jean, running a timorous hand through his head. He's definitely lost his touch, is what he was thinking.

Once he looked up, Steve saw a bemused Jean watching him fidget. She was *definitely* not expecting him to do that, and the awkwardness of the situation somehow managed to feed her unbridled humor.

He sighed.

"Was that bad timing? 'cause I thought it was good timing because you were sad and I'm trying to comfort you." He humorously asked, babbling and trying to play off his move as a joke. There was a playful note in his voice that reached his eyes.

The redhead just smirked at the mortified Steve who had paled considerably since his action.

Parked in the Cabin's driveway, was Steve's burgundy BMW. The two sitting comfortably inside the car after deciding to leave the party early, they stopped by a diner for some take out. It was the best decision ever.

Jean laughed out loud as Steve - who claimed to be a master of catching food with his mouth- failed to receive a french fry into his oral cavity for the tenth time.

"Wait! Wait wait!" He enthused, grabbing the piece of food and

directly placing into his mouth, giving up on tossing it. "OH! I got it."

Jean stifled a laugh and shook her head at Steve's well-meaning idiocy. "That's great, that was all you." She exclaimed, speaking in a sweetly sarcastic way.

Her laughter dying down, Jean maintained a smiling facet, feeling uplifted after the night's events. "This has been a really a fun night." She thanked the boy, who smiled in return. "I'm sorry if I flipped out on you earlier." She apologized, referring to their almost kiss scene.

Vigorously shaking his head, Steve's eyes widened. "No, no, it's fine. My timing was just.. *Bizarre*." He reassured.

No matter what he said, Jean felt a tug at her heartstrings for rejecting the nice boy. "I'm just going through a lot of shit right now, I'm sorry." She explained.

"Well, I'm the one who's sorry you're going through stuff. I wish I could help."

Eyes glossy, Jean nodded in appreciation. "You're a really great guy, Steve."

"Thanks." He awed, genuinely touched with the notion. "And you're an awesome girl, Jean."

"Do you wanna hang out some other time?" At his suggestion, the red haired girl lifted her eyebrows and Steve was fast to clarify his point. "As *friends*, I mean."

"Yeah, yeah I'd really like that." She exclamation, her green eyes bright with pure delight.

## 8. CHAPTER 7

### Chapter 7: The Home Visit

THE June summer break was here. And with it came Mike's incessant need to come over to the cabin *everyday*, early morning and leave late at night.

With the fact that Jean shared a room with El, it was no secret that the redhead was cramping their style. So she did her best to get out of their hair as much as possible; only spending her time in the living room, sometimes watching TV or playing boardgames with Hop, and by going out to hang with Steve.

Just like today.

"A date?" Eleven's out of nowhere question brought Jean at a stop as she finished getting dressed and about to drape a bag on her shoulder.

"Wait, what?" Jean slightly gasped, incredibility fluttering in her tone. "What makes you say that?"

Eleven coiled back a bit, feeling like she said something wrong. "Mike said it was."

At the small farewell party they'd held for Dustin, who was leaving for summer camp, the topic of the two older teens came up. Dustin insisted that they were just friends- albeit, it was because he developed a small crush on Jean- while Mike said that there was definitely something going on between the two.

Raising her hand and placing it gently on Eleven's shoulder, Jean asserted, "Well you shouldn't believe everything a boy tells you."

She wasn't going to lie, after spending more time with him over the past two weeks, Jean had some thoughts of what it would be like to date Steve. He was handsome, sweet and funny. That almost kiss that happened weeks prior definitely helped plant those ideas.

But she didn't know who she was, *literally*. So she wasn't about to be a

part of two when she wasn't even a whole one. It may sound silly, but it wouldn't have been fair to her or to him.

Plus, Steve never *actually* said anything about liking her.

He was her friend. The only person her own age that she actually hung out with, and from what she gathered, the same could be said for him.

"Steve and I are just friends. He's a good guy." Jean continued.

Eleven silently agreed to the latter statement. Mike Wheeler had told her of that fateful night she closed the gate; Steve protected them as they made their way to the hub, doused the entire area in gasoline and set it ablaze. He entirely put himself at risk for the group of kids.

And Dustin wouldn't shut up about how cool he was.

Seeing Jean finish styling her fiery hair into a side braid, Eleven smiled softly. "Pretty."

"Thanks." Jean awed. "You're beautiful, too. You know that, right?" She cooed, looking over to the brown haired girl.

"I am?" El said, unsure of her statement.

"Of course!" Jean gushed. As El looked down to her own oversized clothes, she understood where that insecurity was stemming from.

"How about we go shopping sometime? I hear the mall has really cool outfits we could buy." She suggested. A smile rose to El's lips but quickly faded as a cautious look came up on her face instead.

"Too many people, too dangerous."

Jean scoffed, playfully rolling her eyes. "I'll be with you, so don't worry about it. It'll be our little secret." She whispered the last part, prompting El to smile brightly.

Jean 'borrowed' Mike's bicycle to get to Steve's place. Since he was going to be spending the entire day in El's bedroom, she was sure he wouldn't even notice. She didn't want to bother Steve by asking to



pick her up, because he'd been doing so a lot lately. And with Jim's police work, she didn't want him to be late. Jean didn't want to be a burden.

Navigating through the beautiful neighborhood of Loch Nora, she admired the fancy area as she pedaled along the road.

Jean enjoyed as the fresh summer breeze hit her face and made her braided red hair flow back behind her. If she wasn't strictly following the specific instructions to Steve's house, she was sure she'd be lost in the moment.

Reaching her desired destination, Jean got off the bike and lead it into the driveway. One observation she made once she'd seen the house was; it was *huge*.

She ringed the doorbell, hoping to god that she got the right house, and was relieved to see Steve's smiling face when the door flew open.

"Jeez, if I'd known I would've been nicer to you." Was the first thing that came out of her mouth, entering the house when Harrington sidestepped for her to go in.

Steve chuckled, shutting the door behind him. "Welcome to my humble abode."

"Humble?" She retorted playfully, seeing that the interior of the house was even more grand.

The two laughed as they maneuvered their way inside the place.

Jean stretched up her arms in the air, her body becoming stiff from being seated on the couch for too long.

Noticing that they needed a change of scenery from watching TV in the living room, Steve and her made their way to the backyard.

Steve slid the glass doors, allowing him and Jean out in the fresh air. A nice warmth encasing the redhead as she went out.

"Aaand you have a pool." Jean exclaimed.

"Yeah.." He answered, almost grimly to Jean's surprise, but she didn't ask why.

She didn't know the horrible thing that happened here in the past.

"Wanna go for a swim?" Asked Steve after seeing the wondrous sparkle in Jean's eyes.

Bending down, she folded up her jeans, intending to just dip her legs into the cool water. "No, I'm good." Jean said, feeling a slight shiver once she sat on the edge and introduced her feet into the pool. Steve copied her actions.

"Why didn't you tell me you were *rich*?" Jean drawled out in a teasing manner, wriggling her eyebrows at the boy sitting beside her.

A lighthearted snigger slipped from Steve's mouth. She really wasn't letting this thing go. "I thought I did. I always try to tell everybody." He joked.

"What?" Jean laughed, lips parted in amusement.

With a dip of his hands in the pool, Steve slicked his perfect brown hair back, relishing at the cool sensation. "But for real, my dad's the one who's loaded and he won't even give me a job. Talking about how he was teaching me a lesson." Steve sighed, his hand involuntarily reaching to the back pocket of his tight pants, which prompted Jean's eyes to follow his hand. There was a diagonally folded up paper sticking from his pocket.

"And what is this?" She asked, snatching the item from him, taking him by surprise for a moment there.

"A job application." Steve replied in a manner of fact, pursing his lips after he did.

An exaggerated offended look, that spoke, '*how dare you keep this from me*' took place on Jean's face. "You didn't tell me you were applying for a job, either." A playful glare in her eyes, Jean chirped. "You didn't tell me anything, *Steve*."

A smile graced the brown haired boy's cheeks. "Well, maybe it's

because I assumed you already knew." He replied, suggesting at her telepathy.

"So, what are you applying for?"

"Uhh, just a job at the Scoops Ahoy in the mall's food court." Jean noticed how his smile slightly faltered, his eyes dropping to the blue of the water. "It's probably the *worst* job to start with, but my foot's at the door." He said, attempting to see the silver lining of the job, even though it only paid about three dollars an hour.

Jean sent him a comforting look, raising her arm to gently pat his shoulder. "Congrats. You made the best use of the options the situation provided you, I'm impressed." He glanced up to Jean, her voice was melodious, hypnotizing even, keeping Steve rooted to the spot. She always knew how to cheer him up.

She grinned, and he reciprocated the expression, his eyes dropping at her lips for a split second. On instinct, Jean did the same, imagining what would happen if they'd closed the distance between them.

Damn Mike for planting the thought of this being a date in El's head, and thus in Jean's, as well.

The redhead was completely unaware of how flustered the slick haired boy was by her touch and her proximity. Steve had to control his breathing so Jean wouldn't notice how affected he was by her.

Gulping harshly, Steve broke their eye contact and looked away, eliciting the same reaction from a slightly flustered Jean and she tore her touch away from his shoulder.

"Well, I had to keep myself busy what with Dustin heading off to camp for a month." He said, his voice a bit out of tune at the beginning.

Steve's words made her laugh out loud. And after the laughter died down, a comfortable silence draped over the two.

"Y'know, I wish I could've applied, too. I've just been coasting along." Jean confessed, sighing at her helplessness.

"Why don't you? Maybe we could end up slinging ice cream all miserable together." Steve said.

Jean's green eyes traveled back to Steve's, and he didn't miss the disappointment flashing in them. "No paperwork, remember?"

It's been a month since El found her in the woods, with no memories of her life. And she wasn't proud to say that she made no progress on that front whatsoever. If Hopper hadn't taken her in, she didn't know where she'd be right now.

Jean didn't speak of it, but it was a recurring thought in her head. She had no birth certificate, no legal documentation of her existence, just her. No one was even looking for her; Hop had been on the lookout for any missing persons or searches of people in the adjacent states and there were no results. It meant that she had no family, either.

She was nobody. It was a vexing truth to deal with.

Steve saw the distressed look on the girl's face and instantly felt bad. Here he was complaining about the fact that he had no future while hers was as bleak as it could get.

"Oh, sorry, I totally forgot." He apologized.

Despite the trouble she was in, Jean acted relatively normal - as normal as a telepathic teenager would at the very least- and she barely spoke of her amnesia to him.

She tried to focus on the good in her life right now.

Jean waved a dismissive hand. "You don't have to be sorry all the time."

"I did *not* know that." He joked while leaning back, making the girl giggle. Now that was a sound he loved hearing.

"Just like with me, you don't have to know anything by now. You could try different things *without* paperwork. Don't stress about it." Steve declared.

"Ooo like what?" She cooed, but genuinely curious, a look of puzzlement drawn on her face.

Looking up to the sky thoughtfully, realization flashed across Steve's face before he replied in a humorous action. "You could babysit the kids while I'm away."

"Ha ha." The red haired telepath sarcastically muttered.

A good minute passed.

After letting her eyes roam her surroundings, the same warmth from before surged through her again at the scenery before her. "It's so beautiful." She earnestly said with a smile. Her eyes softened as she saw the

Steve gave his crush a heartfelt look. "Yeah." Although he agreed, he wasn't talking about the view.

Perking a well shaped brow, Jean smiled to herself before looking gratefully to Steve. "Hey, thanks for letting me come over."

Steve was taken aback a bit. In all honesty, he was the one who should be thankful for her company, he thought. With his dad away on business again -his mother following suit- and Dustin going away, Steve would have spent most of his summer alone. Without her, he would've been painfully aware of his lack of friends.

"I'm glad you did." He truthfully replied.

## 9. CHAPTER 8

### Chapter 8: The Divulgence of One's Mind

A LONG line was starting to pool at the Starcourt box office but luckily, Steve had gotten their tickets while he waited for Jean.

However, the concession stand was a different story, they waited for what seemed like forever for an order of popcorn, which despite Jean's objections, Steve generously paid for.

They walked through the dark aisle and reached the cinema, only lit by the large screen playing a selection of advertisements.

"Front seats are for suckers." Steve whispered when he found a prime spot in the back of the theater, thinking those who sat too close to the screen to be idiots. He and Jean squeezed past those already seated.

Once they settled in, things were quiet as they watched the previews, a soft smile crossed Steve's features as he glimpsed between the bright screen and the beautiful Jean Grey.

Jean slumped back in her chair, taking a sip from the icy cola drink in hand and before the movie began, she thought to break the news to her friend. "By the way, I decided to take your advice."

"What advice?" Steve said in a gentle voice. The movie starting to play behind him, but his eyes were only on her.

"You know, I decided to follow in your footsteps."

"Not following." He admitted, looking clueless.

"As you may or may not know, Lucas' parents are going to be busy all summer." She explained step by step, seeing Steve nodding, indicating that he followed with her.

"Uh huh."

"Sooo, you're looking at Lucas' little sister's babysitter!" She enthused,

her volume turned down but Jean's excitement visible from her tone and facial expression. The red haired eighteen year old was grateful to get a job. One that she liked to think would be perfect for her, since she got along really well with El and her friends. While Hopper disagreed at first, he relented eventually as she argued that she needed to become her own person and find her way in the world. She couldn't let her amnesia debilitate her from going on with her life.

"That's great!" Steve congratulated her, a little too loud -much to the dismay of the people sitting next to him.

*"Shush."*

Steve Harrington's face fell, and an adorable pout took place as he received a number of glares. "Why am I always shushed when I'm with you?" He mumbled to himself, eliciting a soft giggle from Jean.

Not wanting to bother people, the redhead leaned in to whisper into Steve's ear. Fortunately for him, she missed the slightest shudder that came from him as a reaction to her warm breath tickling his skin.

"Anywho, her parents love the fact that I have basically no plans whatsoever for the summer so I can be at their beck and call whenever they need."

"Hey, we hang out." Steve retorted, somewhat offended but he played it off in a joking way.

She sent him a knowing look. "Yeah, but you start working at Scoops in a couple of days."

"True.." The brown haired male agreed. "But you can always come and visit, check me out all in uniform." Steve suggested in a flirty tone. He was told that he'd be receiving a sailor uniform, so he imagined an outfit that made his masculinity ooze out. An actual manly sailor's look.

Little did he know, the actual uniform would make him look like a toddler. And it would later fuel Jean's unbridled amusement.

"Deal."

A few days have passed.

Much to Eleven's dismay, Jean was hanging out with Max for the day. Of course, Jean had to choose the Mayfield residence over sitting awkwardly in the cabin's living room, with a seething Hopper while El and Mike 'hung out'. When they all knew they were making out. All. The. Time.

If Jean were to interrupt their session to grab something from the room for even a second, she would feel the irritation radiating from the prepubescent boy ready to engulf her.

So even though it bothered El, Jean ran over to Max' place.

"I don't see how this is any fun for you." The telepath pinched up her face as she looked at the younger girl. She was laying on her stomach atop Max's bed, while the other redhead was sitting up, cross-legged.

"Come *on*! One more time." Max drawled, pouting to get her way. She was incredibly bored.

The two girls had spent all their time in the Mayfield girl's room, and they were running out of things to do. They styled each other's red hair, listened to songs, and ate a massive amount of junk food whilst reading magazines and comic books, and so on.

But with them hitting a wall on what they should do next, and Jean still having an hour left until Mike went home and vacating her spot on the bed, they came up with a rather boring option. It being Jean glancing at a book page and then narrating the whole thing from memory.

"Okay!" Jean relented, sending Max a playful eyeroll.

The older female grabbed a book that was sprawled on the bed and with a single look at a one of its pages, she shut it and put it aside.

Max, for some reason -boredom mostly- couldn't get enough of Jean's display of her eiditic memory as she muttered each line with perfect precision. She didn't believe Dustin at first when he'd told her, but now she was amazed. "Can you please take my exams for me when we go back to school?" Max jokingly asked, but would absolutely go



with it if Jean agreed.

Jean chuckled. "Or I could just read your teacher's mind and figure out what the exam questions are gonna be."

"Oh my gosh, yes!" Max wholeheartedly smiled, thinking about how easy it would have been to pass Mr. Clark's science class if she had superpowers.

"I'm really glad you came over." The shorter teen mumbled, as if she was embarrassed to say so.

"So am I." Jean genuinely meant it. Both Max and El were wonderful to her, they were strong in their own ways and kindhearted. She found it was a shame they couldn't be closer than they currently were.

"It's a nice change from hanging out with the boys all the time." Max said, pursing her lips. "I don't really have...girl friends."

"Yeah, you do. You have El." The amnesic girl said on impulse without thinking.

The Dig-Dug-high-score holder perked a brow at Jean, mockery entangling in her tone. "Either your amnesia has started to affect your short term memory or you have selective blindness."

"*Rude.*" Jean said, feigning being hurt.

Max laughed.

"El would rather fling me off my skateboard using her powers than hang out with me."

"Well, maybe you guys got off on the wrong foot, that's all. I'm sure you'll be able to work passed it and become besties."

"Yeah, right." Max muttered, rolling her eyes, but genuinely hoping that was true. Ever since Lucas had told her about Eleven, Max had wanted to be her friend. But she was rejected at every gesture she made when she did nothing wrong. Eventually, she gave up, and the two maintained a stable yet somewhat distant relationship.

Shaking her head from the thought, Max went to change the subject. "How are things going on with *Steve*, shouldn't you be hanging out with him?" She suggested, wiggling her brows suggestively. She found that the two would make a great couple. Even if they claimed to be just friends, they've been hanging out together almost every day since the summer vacation started.

Choosing to ignore the younger girl's insinuation at her and Steve's relationship, Jean answered, "Nah, he had to work tonight."

Max scrunched up her features. "He's actually being an adult, it's really weird."

"Speaking of which, I start my babysitting gig tomorrow. Please thank Lucas for me again."

"Are you kidding? He's *over the moon* that he got rid of her!" Max revealed.

"What do you mean?" Jean cluelessly asked, furrowing her eyebrows.

"He was scared that his mom was going to pin Erica to him all summer. You were his scapegoat."

"Wow." The telepathic girl widened her eyes, intimidation creeping up on her now. Erica Sinclair must've been a handful, she thought. "So, any advice?"

Max went thoughtful for a moment. "Just don't take everything she says to heart. She...doesn't have a filter sometimes."

Sometimes? More like *all the time*. But that was something Jean would later find out on her own.

"Hey, how's the superpower training going by the way?" Max asked, getting onto a newer interesting topic.

"Pretty good. I think I'm finally getting the hang of it." Jean exclaimed. No matter what, she didn't fully understand her telepathic capacity, its true nature was a mystery to her, and yet it was part of her. Jean was just grateful that she'd gotten a grasp on the thought broadcasting on everyone's part. With El's help of course.

"That's good to hear. So you can use it at will now?"

"I think so.."

The Mayfield girl tapped Jean's knee, prompting her to sit up facing her. "Okay, go for it." She suggested, offering to let her read her thoughts.

Jean sighed, lifting her hand and placing two of her fingers gently against her temple. She found when she does so, it was easier to focus.

Then, out of nowhere, loud heavy metal music roared from a room adjacent to Max's. It broke Jean's attention, but not before she heard an insult echoing in the younger girl's head.

*'That bitch!'*

Jean recoiled. "I hope you didn't mean me."

Max waved a dismissive hand at her. "No, it's my stupid stepbrother." She bit out, as she felt her insides almost vibrating from how high the music volume was from the room on the other side of the wall.

"The music is pretty loud." Jean trailed off, mentally thinking what kind of person Max's stepbrother was. She never spoke of him, so Jean only knew of his existence.

"Can you please tell him to turn it down?"

"What?" Jean's incredulous tone fluttered in her tongue as she widened her eyes at the shorter girl. She wanted her to step up to her brother -a person she'd never met- and tell him to turn down the music?

"Please." Max begged, stretching her vowels. She wanted nothing to do with him for the day after what had happened the night before. Billy's temperament was always worse towards her every time after his father's... scoldings. So, she thought it'd be best if Jean had done so, as Billy would never reveal his violent nature in front of a stranger or take out his anger out on her. He was like a loose canon that would lash out if tested.

Jean Grey wondered why Max looked so distressed, but eventually gave a shrug. It was the least she could do after spending the day in her household. "Fine."

"Thanks. First door on the right, down the hall." Max chirped to a reluctant Jean.

Jean walked through the short corridor with small steps, and halted once she came to a door from behind which the source of the noise blared. Forming a fist, she raised her hand and knocked softly on the door.

There was no answer.

She knocked again, this time loudly and incessantly to at least get the sound across from the loud music.

Just when she was about to give up, the door burst open, startling her as it did. But what surprised her the most was the person by the threshold to the room.

"What?!" He yelled at the moment he opened the door, before really getting a look at who it was.

"What are you doing here?" Billy snapped once he realized who it was, his shoulders were tense, his jaw clenched.

Jean gulped, she didn't realize how terrifying the flirt could be when he wanted to. "I was hanging out with Max.. I didn't know you were her brother." She was still recovering from the initial shock of finding that Billy Hargrove, the guy who took her to a diner without asking, was Max's brother.

The hallway was dark, but as her vision adjusted, she got a good look at his face. His eyes were red rimmed, with deep bags under his eyes. When he tilted his head slightly (wondering why Jean hung out with his sister) it was then Jean could see the purple bruise that bloomed from his cheekbones to his temple.

Her entire body seized up for a moment before she reacted all at once, almost wanted to throw herself at him on instinct. "A-are you okay? Did you get into a fight or something?" She asked, concerned

as she was inspecting his face.

"That's none of your business." Billy extinguished the cigarette at his door frame and growled in response. He looked at her, his eyes frighteningly empty. "Why are you here?"

Inhaling sharply, Jean remembered her reason for coming. "Can you please turn down the music?" She politely requested. According to his mood, Jean expected Billy to decline and shut the door on her face. But to her surprise, he sidestepped, giving her a look that said, 'if you want to, then go ahead and do it yourself'.

Looking between him and the speakers that was only inches from her, Jean hesitated before walking into the lion's den. She quickly leaned forward and turned down the heavy metal to Max's delight.

Unbeknownst to her, Billy was lustfully looking over her. Seeing the tight camisole and summer shorts Jean was wearing, the flawless skin it revealed, he knew that he found something that would completely change his foul mood.

Jean turned to face Billy, expecting him to be a couple of feet away, but was taken a back when she saw him saunter towards her. She watched carefully as Billy's whole demeanor changed. It was like something flipped inside of him, and then an almost amused snarl stretched his lips.

"Leaving so soon?" His movement was painfully slow, but Jean stood her ground.

"Umm.. Yes?"

"You sure you don't wanna stay for a bit?" Billy asked after a while, taking a strand of her red hair, and twirling it between his fingers.

Just then, Jean Grey realized with striking clarity that Billy Hargrove was completely unpredictable.

Face scrunched in confusion, she readily shook her head and removed her hair from his grasp. "No, I'm good."

When being released from Billy's clutches, she stumbled away from

the denim clad male, and made a large distance between them.

Suddenly the sound of a lock clicking met her ears, causing the redhead to realize that Billy wasn't in front of her anymore. She quickly turned on the heel of her feet and looked at Billy with wide eyes as she saw him stand by the door.

"Did you just lock the door?" She hissed, stomping towards the blonde and trying to reach for the handle. But Billy wrapped his large hand around her small fist.

"Let me go." Jean tried to yank her hand out of his hold, but his grip has proved to be too tight. A few angry breaths escaped through her nose, and her palm began to become sweaty. She peeped at Billy through her lashes, and caught his eyes gazing at her.

"What are you doing?" The green eyed girl held her breath as now Billy towered over her, he only had a couple of inches on her, but his muscular form made him look so large in comparison.

"When are you gonna drop that this hard-to-get act, babe?" He drawled out, his low voice rumbled within his throat. His darkened eyes trailed over her body agonizingly slow, skimming over her bare shoulders, the soft skin of her throat and the swell of her breasts.

Jean's skin tingled under his gaze, warmth flooding her.

"I'm *not* putting up an act." She denied, his gaze eliciting the trembling of her voice, making it seem like she was lying.

The Californian smirked smugly. "You sure about that?" His rough voice was swimming with tempting darkness and heat crawled over Jean's skin. To her memory, this was the first time she'd been this close to a boy.

Billy was leaning closer, his body heat reaching for hers. There was a lull suddenly as both teenagers inhaled. Jean's senses were flooded with cigarette smoke and a tempting spicy scent of Billy's.

With his eyes boring into hers, she realized how extremely close the two were, their chests nearly touching.

Jean was so close to Billy that she could see as he took a deep and jagged breath in, but it wasn't the only thing she could see once his arm brushed against hers.

It all came crashing in on Jean at once. An ache began to set in behind her temple. She could hear her own heart beat loud and clear. Flashes of images filled Jean's head when Billy's arm grazed hers, and a sharp pain ran through her head concisely.

She was in his mind.

And when Jean reached into it, all she found was pain.

There was a flicker of the past which was pushed forwards to her, bringing itself to her own brain so she could relive it.

*She saw a room, this very same room -in a home that Billy never considered a home- he was on the ground, fingers splayed on the floor and blood dripped beside them, staining the wooden floor red.* Jean felt the pain rushing through her -if not physical, it was an ache in her heart she couldn't soothe. In a heartbeat, she understood everything. *When he looked up, there was a man; he was prevalent in each and every one of his haunting memories that Jean knew who he was even before she heard Billy utter, "Dad."*

And when she flinched, the memory was lost.

Jean wanted to retch. What kind of father would do this? She felt a weight settle on her chest and a knot bending in her stomach.

No one should ever go through what he does.

The things she'd just witnessed when she touched Billy felt as real as if she were seeing them through the boy's eyes. Those visions she had made her feel an intense connection with him. She felt like she somehow understood Billy now.

She was sorry that she didn't before.

Billy would often sit on the bed, music on the loudest volume to tune out the sound of his own jagged breathing. Head in his hands, reluctant tears leaking of both sadness and rage and his tanned skin

ripped and bruised.

His insecurities made him act the way he did. He had a constant need to feel validated and wanted so he resorted to... intimate relations just so he could feel something other than anger. That was what she came to find out.

Jean blinked at his pale blue eyes, her vision turning blurry from the thickening tear film of her eyes. Part of her still envisioned the pain and abuse. It seemed so real.

Determinedly, she squirmed under his touch, trying to untangle herself from him, and she successfully did.

The blonde haired teenager was surprised at her sudden change in demeanor.

While she felt that a long time had passed as she delved into his head, in actuality it'd be less than a fraction of a second.

She sighed, feeling an immense need to console the boy, because she'd felt what he'd felt -as brief as it was.

Blinking a few times, Jean composed herself, meeting her eyes wholeheartedly with his and never breaking contact. "Look, I appreciate that you feel like you need whatever this is."

Billy scoffed at her presumptuous statement. Who was she to tell him what he did or didn't need? She was just a *distraction*, he thought to himself.

"Maybe it's because something happened and this is your way of feeling better about yourself."

Bewilderment blinked across Billy's face as Jean softly spoke, her voice soothing.

"And since I'm sure you think I'm just a *distraction* right now, I'm going to go ahead and not put both of us through that." She said, after hearing his thoughts just now, and her emphasis on the term 'distraction' made Billy slightly flinch.



He didn't know what was going on, why she suddenly spoke like she knew him. Just now, he was sure he had her, and now she talked with such maturity like she was above doing what they were about to do.

All the other girls were dying to get with him. So why not her?

"What are you talking about?" He gruffly asked, stepping back a few paces.

"But I am going to give you this-" Jean stepped up to him all too abruptly, arms raised to place on his shoulders.

*What was this weirdo doing?*

The touch took him by surprise but after composing himself he realized it hadn't really bothered him. If anything the soft touch had been soothing... to the point of gentleness. It caused an unknown warmth to radiate through his body.

"You don't deserve this." Jean asserted, a benevolent smile morphed her features. "You're a good guy. You *will* get through this." She maintained her assuring look, patting his shoulders once before parting from him.

She then turned to unlock the door, to leave and give Billy some space.

"What?" He asked chary and bewildered as he looked at the girl before him.

Half-turned, Jean looked back to the blonde, the smile never leaving her features. "If you ever need anybody to talk to or just...listen, I'm here."

A muscle popped in Billy's locked jaw and his eyes held a mix of sadness and astonishment as he watched her walk away.

He slammed his bedroom door shut with a discrete snuffle, exhaling sharply.

***A/N:-\*Gasps\* A new update this quickly? I should be studying but I***

*just couldn't help myself*

*How are you liking the story so far? Enjoying the flow of events? We're a few chapters away from entering the third season, what would you like to see happen? I'd love to hear about your suggestions! Don't forget to favorite, follow and review!*

## 10. CHAPTER 9

### Chapter 9: Ahoy, And You Look Like This

STEVE Harrington had a perfect view from behind the counter on Jean as she stood from the other side of the mall.

The way she smiled whenever watching over Erica Sinclair and her friends, or when she played with her long, red hair as she got somewhat bored over the kids bickering, those were all things he *couldn't* get enough of.

It came as no surprise to the brown haired nineteen year old when he'd started developing romantic feelings towards Jean.

With the kind of family life Steve came from, this girl was quiet and soothing, she listened in a way that other people haven't listened to him at any point in his life. Not even Nancy did.

From the beginning he found that she was warm, considerate, funny, smart and beautiful. She was perfect. Which was why he was afraid to confess his feelings to her, especially after being shot down from the very beginning.

He knew that he became incredibly awkward and unsuccessful with the girls he served at Scoops Ahoy. He knew that -always reminded by his coworker, Robin Buckley.

The only positive female relationship he seemed to have was with Jean Grey. But she wasn't ready for a relationship.

And he didn't want to lose her. So he settled with being her friend, and watching her from far away for now.

Steve didn't have enough time to gaze at her though, when a slap on his upper arm dragged him from his daydreaming, making him whirl around to see his coworker.

"What are you gawking at?" Robin curiously asked, leaning over the register, her eyed drooping from how bored she was.

"Uhh.. N-nothing."

Too smart to buy his half-baked reply, Robin's eyes immediately searched through the second floor of the mall, and landed on a familiar face. "Is that the girl who came with you on the first day?"

An involuntary smile came upon the brown haired male's face as he made himself busy by cleaning the counter. "Yeah, that's Jean."

"Huh, I don't remember seeing her at school." Robin mumbled, yet loud enough for Steve to hear. She was pretty. She was *really* pretty. If someone like her had went to their high school, she would've known.

"No, she's just here for the summer." He said, technically he wasn't lying, she'd appeared out of nowhere just right before the summer break had began.

Robin perked a brow, her eyes still on the smiling redhead. "She's cute."

"Yeah." Steve breathed out, looking at Jean, as well.

"You guys dating?"

His neck immediately snapped in her direction at the inquiry. "What, no, we're just...*friends*." Robin didn't miss how Steve uttered the last word so defeatedly, his disappointed look to match.

Lifting a curious brow, Robin looked between the two. "*Uh-huh*."

~~~

Jean, accompanying the little Sinclair girl, was browsing through the music records at the mall's Sam Goody.

She was getting the hang of this whole babysitting thing, Erica herself wasn't hard to take care of, in fact she was quite level-headed for her age. It was Erica's group of friends that were considered to be a handful, and since they were together all the time, it seemed to be a package deal.

Jean halted her shuffling through the vinyl when the dark haired girl approached her, holding something in her hand.

"Did anybody ever tell you that you look like this." Erica said, holding up a record. Jean frowned when she looked over to see the picture of the artist, Boy George.

As per Max's warning, Jean found out that Erica had no qualms about speaking her mind, even if what she said would be concerned rude. "No, *thanks*, Erica." The red haired telepath shook her head when she heard Tina and the rest of Erica's friends sniggering in the background.

Jean didn't really take the things she said to heart, that was just how the young girl was, and she was getting used to it. She was sure that deep down, Erica Sinclair meant well.

"Just the facts." She said, rolling her eyes and walking to rejoin her friends.

"You're the meanest person in the world, thank you very much." Jean called out after Erica, following her outside by the fountain.

Erica sighed deeply, tilting her head from her friends to dedicate a frustrated look over in Jean's direction. "You do realize that you don't have to be stuck to me like white on rice."

Jean brushed her own red hair away from her face with a brisk hand. "Hey, I thought you liked hanging with me."

It was the truth, Erica was happy to find out that her sitter wasn't a nerd like her brother who'd recommended her to the job in the first place. And Jean was actually proud when Erica admitted that she was 'kinda cool'.

Rolling her eyes yet again, Erica maintained, "Not *all* the time."

Sighing, Jean contemplated on whether it was alright to leave the ten year old for a few moments with her friends. Green eyes roamed around the second floor until they landed on the Scoops Ahoy shop. "Okay, you stay here and I'll go in there to check up on someone." Jean exclaimed, promoting a satisfied look on Erica's face.

"Don't move." The redhead asserted, walking backwards as she observed the seated girl.

"I got it!" Erica yelled back.

On her way to the ice cream place, Jean Grey passed by the SHAPES Activewear Outlet store, the place where she bought the swimsuit she'd need to wear at the frequent Community pool visits. The summer was an endless loop of going to the mall and the pool for Erica and Jean, but she didn't mind. She was glad that she had money under her expense now that she was working. With it, after saving up, she was able to get a couple of new outfits from the Starcourt mall. But Jean was smart with what she earned and knew how to budget wisely.

The Scoops Ahoy had a fair amount of customers, eating away the summer heat that the AC still failed to extinguish. Nautical upbeat tunes were playing that made a small smile go up on Jean's lips, reminding her of Steve's adorable little outfit.

A disinterested blonde girl was leaning against the counter, her dull lifeless expression was in huge contrast to the lively undertone of the place.

Upon seeing her, Jean noticed that the blue eyed girl slightly perked, asking what she could do for her.

"You must be Robin, I heard a lot about you." Jean said, hands lifted to place on the counter. She was in a cropped long sleeved grey shirt that hugged her waist nicely, hair tucked behind her ears.

Robin smirked at Jean, eyes glinting mischievously. "All terrible, I hope."

"They're not all bad." Jean mused, chuckling a bit. Though Steve *did* mention how often she made fun of him. "For example, I've heard how *phenomenal* you are at scooping ice cream." She joked, her words stemming of the boy's acknowledgment that the dirty blonde was much better at the job than he was.

"Well, you know, I've been saving my skills in so I can shine when I

can finally go pro." Robin drawled, head tilted to the side. The two smiled at one another.

"Is Steve here?" Jean asked, eyes darting around in search of her brown haired friend.

"Dingus, someone's here for you!" Robin yelled, her loud voice taking Jean a bit by surprise.

"What?!" The Grey girl heard Steve's muffled voice blaring from behind a glass window.

Then, the door to the backroom swung open, revealing the sailor uniform-clad Harrington. His brown eyes brightened when they landed on Jean, walking up to her. "Oh, hey, Jean. I didn't know you were here." He claimed, feigning surprise at her presence at the mall when he was clearly staring at her like a stalker just earlier. That made Robin snort loudly at his lie, and he sent her a glare.

"Yeah, I'm here with Erica." She replied, missing their exchange. "So, '*Dingus*' huh, is that your new pet name?" Jean bemusedly asked, bending over to support herself on the counter.

"It sure is." He exclaimed with fake excitement, while Jean laughed softly, the vibration through her chest playful.

"Congratulations on the babysitting gig, by the way."

"Why, thank you. I just hope that I'll be as good as you someday." She playfully said, but her compliment genuine. Steve was incredible with the kids, and especially Dustin who practically worshipped him.

Steve awed, placing a hand over where his heart was, an exaggeration to show how moved he was. "I mean I don't know, it's more of a natural gift." He boosted, chuckling at the end. "You know, we should totally team up and start a babysitting service." He added humorously.

"Oh, my god, yes! We'd be cashing in so much." Jean's lips were half-parted in amusement.

"Wipe the board clean!"

Jean's laugh was growing merrier as Steve's grew deeper. The store was emptying whereas the mall hallways were getting crowded. Jean knew Erica would be wandering off if she was gone too long. "Yeah, we'd be a great couple."

Steve's smile faltered after what she'd said, his heart starting to pulse overtime as he considered the possibility. "Damn straight we would be." He said, his underlying tone in no way indicating that he was joking like before.

He just sincerely hoped she wouldn't read his thoughts at the very moment.

Steve removed his hat, slicking back his fluffy hair after doing so. "Hey, uhh, wanna stay for some ice cream? On the house." He offered, grinning at Jean.

Realizing that it was about time to head back to the young girl, Jean softly declined. "Thanks, but maybe next time. I have a sassy kid to go back to."

"Don't we all." Steve replied, head suggestively nodding towards Robin Buckley.

Jean let a giggle escape from her mouth.

"See ya."

"Bye." He called out warmly, staring longingly as she walked away.

"And yet again." Robin spoke after Jean stepped out of the threshold to the ice cream place. Steve inhaled sharply before turning back to see his coworker holding the board he came to despise.

She drew a line on the 'You Suck' half of the board. And Steve held an incredulous look as she did.

"What are you doing, I wasn't even trying to-" He attempted to deny his failed attempt to flirt with the tall girl, but was interjected by Robin's all knowing look that told him to cut the bullshit.

"Shut up." He bit out, putting back his stupid sailor's hat on top of his

gorgeous head of hair.

~~~

Night time had rolled around the quiet town. Mrs. Sinclair picked up her daughter, and offered a ride to Jean to showcase her gratitude to the sweet girl who'd been taking such good care of her little Erica.

Jean had no trouble taking the bus home, but after Mrs. Sinclair's persistence, she relented and insisted she drop her off on the side of the road, where she would continue her path on foot. Jean had gotten to know her way around the woods so much easier now that she would wander around more often.

"Hey," Greeted the red haired teenager, closing the cabin's door shut behind her.

Jim was the only one seated in the living room while Grey was sure that Eleven and Mike were cramped inside the bedroom.

Tearing his eyes away from the television screen, Hopp looked in Jean's way. "Hey, you're home."

It came as a shock to Hopper how fast they'd adjusted to the red haired girl's presence. She somehow just... fit into their lives. While he had enough rebellious teens to worry about Jean, wasn't one of them. She was warm and kind and wise for her age. And El seemed to listen to whatever she had to say, and copy whatever she was to do.

The mustache that decorated lips raised upwards. He didn't know how he ended up with two daughters instead of one.

"Did you guys have dinner yet?" She asked, shuffling around the kitchen to see no dirty plates in the sink or traces of anyone walking in to it since the morning.

Jim's smile dissipated and he growled in response. "El ate with Mike." The two had ordered a pizza and hid inside the confines of the room once again.

"And you?" Jean asked with a frown. Now she felt bad that with El spending all of her time with her boyfriend, and her own whole sitter

thing, Hopper must've been left out.

"Had a bag of chips." Was his flat out reply as he crushed the can of beer he had in his hand.

"You shouldn't have done that, they're not good for you." Jean softly scolded the older man. She worried for his health, especially now that he'd been stress eating quite often as an outlet for his discomfort of the situation between his daughter and her boyfriend.

Smacking his lips, Hopper got off the chair to join Jean in the kitchen. "If you're worried about my health, then talk to those two." He said, opening the fridge to take out another can of beer.

"El and Mike?" She asked, furrowing her brow at the taller man.

"They're spending way too much time together! You agree with me, don't you?" He yelled in a yelled whisper, his frustration evident in his tone.

Jean weighed her head. Indeed, she thought it was. It was innocent and adorable to her at first, but it slowly turned sickeningly sweet over time. But they were young and in love, so who was to stop them. "Well..."

"What does Joyce think?" She abruptly asked, eliciting a slight flinch from the Chief of Police. Jean had met Joyce, the mother of Will Byers, weeks past. To Jean's knowledge, she was the only person Hopp had willingly entrusted with the true conditions of how he found her, and for good reason. The woman was quite kind and nurturing. Jean could tell that she had both a soft warmth in her, and a viciously protective side that would emerge if anyone she cared for was in danger.

That was probably why Jim had such a major unspoken crush on her.

"Huh?" He asked, his eyes widening a bit at the mention of the object of his affections.

Jean held a teasing grin that Hopper desperately wished would go away. "Joyce. I know you value her opinion *very* much, more than anyone's."

"That's not the point." Hop inhaled sharply, she was deviating from the point with a subject she knew would completely distract him. "I just want her to be her own person, not just that smug bastard's girlfriend."

Wow, Jean thought. She knew he wasn't crazy about the boy, but this morphed into straight up disdain.

"Okay... If personal growth is what you want for her, then let her go out more often, maybe?" She argued. Jean thought that if she was stuck home as much as El was, she'd honestly be ecstatic to have anyone visit -especially if the person is the boy she liked.

Hopper shook his head. "Even when I do, she's attached by the hip to him." He downed the beer before throwing it in the trash.

A wooden chair screeched across the hardwood floor, Jim dragged it and sat on it by the kitchen island, facing the standing Jean. "Could you talk to El? Maybe tell Mike to dial back his visits?" He pleaded. He would do it himself, but he knew they wouldn't listen. Heck, they barely followed his three inch rule about the door. God, they were only fourteen but they were a handful.

He was just over the moon that Jean wasn't seeing anyone.

Jean scrunched up her facial features, lips pursed. It wouldn't seem right to boss El around. It was a parent's duty, is what she believed. "I think that's something you should do."

Jim groaned, pinching his nasal bridge. Maybe he could get Joyce to talk to them.

A/N:-

**Sorry, I just to put that resemblance in there**

## 11. CHAPTER 10

### Chapter 10: The Heroic Lifeguard?

**BILLY** Hargrove watched the bikini-clad Jean from his lifeguard post, smoke dancing in front of his face as he smirked at her through his dark shades.

The air surrounding the Hawkins Community Pool was filled with laughter and bright radio pop music.

After the time he flirted with Jean in his household, Billy never took her up on her offer to listen if he needed it. In fact, the boy had completely distanced himself from Jean from fear at what had happened. She looked him straight in the eye exactly how wanted to be looked at, she told him the things that he exactly needed to hear.

It freaked him out.

How she figured what he was going through was beyond him, Billy had suspected that his stepsister had opened her mouth and said something that suggested at his home situation. But when he confronted Max, she denied his accusations, saying that she never even spoken about him with Jean. And even if Max did tell her - which was untrue- when the redhead comforted him, she didn't gaze at him with pity, no, that would've driven him mad.

She was looking at *him* like she could see through his facade, as if she knew and seen exactly what he's gone through.

And little did he know, she did.

So as he stared at her from afar, he couldn't help but want to solve the mystery that was Jean Grey. And yet he didn't want anything to do with her all the same.

Jean had invaded his mind, every sleeping and waking moment of Billy's was spent thinking about her. He'd kept himself busy; working out, his job as a lifeguard, even doubled his action with the ladies thanks to his shirtless form at the pool. But through it all, she'd

intrude his thoughts, unwelcome and unwilling to leave.

Billy was getting agitated about this.

Never in his life has he spent so much time brooding over some girl. He needed to do something about it, and quick.

Then, Billy realized; Jean was different than the other girls he's been with because he's never actually been *with* her -and not due to lack of trying.

Yes, that's what he needed. For her to get out of his thoughts and into his bed.

One good screw, and he'd get her out of his system.

He hoped.

Hawkins, Indiana was growing hotter and hotter by the day as the month of July approached, the redhead found. Babysitting Erica Sinclair, the occasional mall and pool visits is what seemed to take up all of Jean's time.

Lounging across a chair in the summer heat, Jean tuned out the cheerful screams and laughter of the Hawkins pool.

Erica seemed to be careless with what the redhead was up to as long as she didn't boss her around.

Purple pair of sunglasses covering her eyes, Jean allowed her eyes to travel to the tall, umbrella covered, lifeguard chair upon which Billy was seated. Although she'd been frequenting the pool for a while now for Erica's sake, she didn't speak with him since the time she'd seen his memories.

She was still amazed at what she'd done. It seemed there were still unexplored aspects of her ability that she still didn't fathom.

She had no idea.

It was partly frustrating for the redhead. Being allowed to relive others memories while no matter how she tried, she was blocked

from her own. It was safe to say that Jean was beginning to accept that her own mind was fighting her. And if she were to pressure it, then she would only feel worse.

So she just had to wait for it to comply. Try to live her life normally, and that is what she's been doing for the summer.

Even though Billy Hargrove barely spoke to her, still, Jean had her fair share of boys hitting on her at the pool. She knew she looked good in her two piece swimming suit, but she wasn't cocky about it. And yet, she couldn't withstand the strange males approaching her and attempting to flirt with her. Heck, there was another lifeguard at the pool who proved to be almost as persistent as Billy once was with her. He wouldn't stop bothering her with his flirtatious attempts, so, that was why she was grateful for the Hargrove boy's change in shifts. And she began seeing more of Billy and less of that dark haired lifeguard.

Her mind back on Billy, Jean realized that due to the psychic link she formed with him, she didn't pity him, she *empathized* with him. Which was why she understood why he kept his distance. He didn't accept help easily, too stubborn and hard edged. She also thought that from his point of view, he must've felt exposed and nothing but shocked at what she'd said.

They saw each almost every other day, and never talked to one another, but Jean always felt his eyes on her. She wasn't sure what to make of those lingering stares, and he didn't seem to even have the decency to look away when she noticed.

Now, to her surprise, Billy's head turned and his eyes met with hers. The blonde dedicated a flirty smirk in her way, and Jean impulsively looked away from the stun of being caught staring at the him.

The redhead suddenly became hyperaware of the stink-eyes a number of the adult women were sending her.

She didn't know that they glared at her from the sheer jealousy of Billy's unbridled attention on her all summer.

Being curled up underneath the large blue umbrella had proven too

suffocating for the telepath in this heat and the harsh glares she's been receiving. So she got up from the plastic chair and approached the poolside.

Jean laughed as she saw Erica and her friends jumping in the pool, splashing droplets of chlorinated water on her legs.

With a soft splash, Jean entered the water. She exhaled and felt herself relax. She looked around the public area, watching children swimming around and adults watching and talking.

The red haired teen held her breath and dived inside the the water, her arms legs were gently moving as she swam around the deep pool.

With her translucent green eyes open, Jean felt a moment of clarity encasing her.

The serene blue of the water was somehow began reminding her of... someone.

*'I'm not leaving you. Not until I know you're gonna be okay.'* A soft voice rang across Jean's head. And an ache began to set in behind her temple.

*'Something's... happening to me.'* Jean could hear her own voice saying, speaking to someone, her own voice trembling from panic and worry.

Then, as she looked around her, the world began to fade away. It faded into something she'd never seen before- but was so, so real she couldn't deny it happening before her eyes.

*'So, come home. Let me take care of you.'* A silhouette of a blue? woman, her features blurred like a mosaic approached her. *'No, you can't. You can't, you don't.. You don't.. know what it's like.'* Jean could feel the words leaving her lips without even trying, it was like she was detached from her body as she watched the scene unfold. *'Then tell me.' 'Cause when it comes... people get hurt. 'I'm not afraid of you, Jean. Look at me. Focus on my voice.'* The woman soothed, trying to calm Jean. Jean just watched her. She was frozen, face stricken and hands clenched by her sides. Her breaths were shallow. She could feel her eyebrows quivering between neutral and and furrowed, and lips trembling. *'We're going to get through*

*this together. I'm not giving up on you, Jean. This is what family does. We take care of each other. You're my family, Jean.'The scene in front of her seemed to both move in a blur and so slowly she could see everything.'Can't... breathe.'* Jean choked out.'I love you, Jean. It's gonna be okay.' The woman reassured, her tone fluttering with benevolence.'Stay away from me. Stop, stop, stop, stop!'

Just then, Jean felt nothing but cold. Her extremities frozen, her lungs were incompressible in her attempts to catch a breath.

She felt all alone in a never ending darkness.

After what seemed like an eternity. A reassuring thing happened.

An immeasurable amount of relief washed over Jean when she felt a warmth consuming her body, seeping into her all -especially, her *lips*.

"Jean! Jean!"

"Are you with me?!" Billy yelled out, his voice breaking in frustration.

The Community Pool of Hawkins had turned grimly quiet when one of its frequent visitors went under the water and never made it out on their own.

Onlookers gathered in circles around the unconscious eighteen year old, whispering in wonder how this could have happened.

Billy heeded no mind to the people surrounding him as he performed CPR on the red haired girl, desperate to resuscitate her. The lifeguard was getting anxious by the second, ever since noticing she'd been missing from the surface for too long, he jumped right in and pulled her unmoving body out.

His breathing was picking up as he finished the compressions, his golden blonde hair dripping wet as his shoulders rose with each inhalation. Billy's pale blue eyes glossed over in fear of her being a goner.

The girl just wouldn't wake up.

But to his relief and everyone else's at the Hawkins pool, Jean Grey



came back to the land of the living with a powerful cough, her lungs expelling all the water she had inhaled.

"Jesus Christ, thank god!" He breathed out. Words couldn't express the lifeguard's relief. He wasn't the religious type, but that was all he could mutter in response to his gratitude that she didn't die on him.

Even though her eyelids were fluttering open, Billy found that she was still unresponsive to her surroundings. "Jean, are you okay?"

*'I thought I lost you.' 'I know. But I came back to you. I'll always come back to you.'*

Opening her eyes, Jean wasn't sure where she was anymore; because the sight before her eyes was a blurry silhouette of a boy crouching over her, his tone showcasing his desperation and fear.

"Scott."

The blonde teenager visibly tensed. At first, Billy thought that he heard wrong because the girl stated it more like a tentative question than an actual statement. "What? No, it's Billy."

The boy looked up from Jean who was still lying flat to Heather who was crouching down beside him. "Did she hit her head?" He asked, wondering why she looked so confused.

Heather Holloway shook her head in response. Come to think of it, the redhead had no good reason to drown, she didn't fall in unintentionally, nor did she hit her head. She just..stopped moving out of nowhere. "I don't think so..."

Looking between the two lifeguards, Jean tried to calm her breathing, everything became hazy as she tried to recall what happened after she went into the pool. "What's going on?" She asked, sitting up, then Billy and Heather rushed to help her to her feet.

Looking around the disrupted ambiance of the pool, the people surrounding them halting all activities, Billy suggested to his coworker. "Heather, why don't you take her inside and patch her up."

"Got it." Said girl nodded, wrapping a supportive hand around Jean's

shoulders.

As the two girls headed inside, Jean could hear Billy's howling, telling people to settle down and to get on with their activities.

After arriving inside the staff's resting room, Heather leaded Jean to sit on a chair and she sat beside her.

"What happened?" Jean voiced out her confusion, her mind was jumbled with all that went down.

The Holloway girl continued to check the redhead for any external wounds, making use of the first aid courses she took. She furrowed her dark brows, surprised at the rescued girl's inability to recall the events. "You were in the pool, drowning..."

The teenage telepath nodded for her to continue, although she had no clue as to why she drowned in the first place.

"Then Billy jumped in and rescued you."

It was all so heroic, Heather thought. The way he ran and dived in so frantically, getting out of the water carrying Jean bridal style... It made her want to receive the very same treatment from the attractive boy.

A stun flashed across Jean's face. "He did?"

"Yeah." The curly haired girl smiled comfortingly. "You really gave us a scare, not moving or breathing."

"Thank you." Jean returned the expression, her grin more of that to show her gratitude.

"No problem."

"Stay here, I'll go get your stuff for you." Heather said, jumping to get feet and heading out.

After she returned, she brought Jean's bag that had her clothes back for her and left her to change. Then, realization hit Jean like a truck.

Erica.

In a hurried rush Jean Grey shimmed into her denim jeans and threw on her top.

*I'm the worst sitter in the world*, Jean thought as she sprinted outside. The cement was hot against her feet and she looked around to find Erica while wading into the pool.

She wasn't there.

Trying not to panic, the amnesic female thought to look inside the locker rooms. The sound of screaming children echoed through the empty, tiled, pool changing rooms. Avoiding the gross parts of the floor, Jean made a mental note to mention general pool cleanliness to one of the staff as she made her way inside.

As she navigated through the place, the redhead ended up in a different room but one that looked similar in design to the changing rooms. Lockers were to her left as she walked around, eyes darting in different directions.

"Erica?" Her voice echoed, hearing light footsteps coming her way, Jean sincerely hoped it was the ten year old.

Looking up through her lashes, she saw Billy walking out of what she supposed was the shower with his hair dripping wet and a towel covering only his waist.

Her eyes *may* have lingered slightly too long on his extremely toned chest before she moved her head up and focused on his smirking face. "Like what you see?" Chuckling, Billy teased as he sauntered towards her. He was pleasantly surprised to see her here.

"What are you doing here, doll?" Her cheeks were on fire after she was caught practically ogling his muscles.

As she got a better look at him, she understood why the girls at the pool were always gushing about him. They weren't wrong about his looks. He was incredibly attractive. Curly, dirty blonde hair that framed his face well. Jean had never liked the idea of a mullet but damn, he made it look good. He had the most beautiful eyes, blue

like the sea. Eyelashes that any girl would be jealous of.

"I was.. Looking for Erica." Gulping, Jean muttered. For some reason, unlike before, she found difficulty speaking with the blonde. Maybe it was because he was half naked, or maybe because he just saved her life. She didn't know.

"That brat you're babysitting? Her mom came and picked her up."

Billy's statement was what prompted the huge sigh of relief that escaped her mouth. "Oh, thank god."

"Thanks." Tearing her eyes away from Billy Hargrove, Jean looked down to the tiled floors, her fingers fumbling. "For what you did."

With a smirk, Billy walked passed Jean, making his way his locker. "It's my job, babe. Don't worry about it." Billy shrugged off her grateful words, as if it was no big deal. In all honesty, he felt panic washing over him when he saw Jean's lifeless body floating around in the water earlier, his body moved before he could think.

He was sure he wouldn't have been this frantic if it was someone else, even if it was part of his job. Why was he that worried? No answer came to his head.

After noticing that Jean was about to leave, he decided to ask a question that's been gnawing at the back of her head for a while. "Who's Scott?" He bit out, clenching his teeth in jealousy.

"Huh?" His question made her abruptly stop in her footsteps.

"Scott. You said his name first thing when you woke up."

Jean flinched, she tried to go through her head, attempting to find someone with that extremely familiar name. But she got nothing. "I don't know a Scott."

Billy chuckled, almost bitterly. "You sure about that?"

"Umm.. Yeah." Jean mumbled, paying no mind to his tone. Why did she sound so unsure herself?

Billy's locker opened with a thud, snapping Jean out of her thoughts. The guy looked at her expectantly, seeing that she wasn't making any move to leave. "What, you wanna help me get dressed? You know I won't mind."

"You're unbelievable." Flustered at his flirty offer, Jean left in a flurry of blushed cheeks.

"And you're a handful, Grey." Billy mused.

A swell formed in her abdomen from Billy's voice calling out for her as she made her way out of the the locker rooms. Her breath had gotten stuck on her throat and her knees wanted to buckle.

She wouldn't have wanted him to save her life if that's the sort of reaction she would be getting around him from then on.

**A/N:-You guysssss DID YOU SEE THE SEASON 4 TEASER TRAILER?!!!! I'M SO HYPED OMFG"We're not in Hawkins anymore."OMG IT FITS PERFECTLY WITH WHAT I HAVE IN STORE FOR JEAN**

## 12. CHAPTER 11

### Chapter 11: The Unsigned Love Letter

IT was a quiet in Scoops Ahoy, Steve and Robin only having a handful of customers on the slow evening.

Over the thirty minute period of his break, striking out words all day long, deleting and trying again, Steve finally came up with something to write.

He wasn't crazy about it, but it was the best he could come up with. He was afraid that if he tried with it for too long, worried that the jitters would take over and he would end up not writing anything at all.

The brown haired male was never the type to write stupid love letters. It was all Dustin Henderson's idea. The boy in camp wrote to Steve, since they've been corresponding over the past few weeks. Dustin suggested that Steve first attempt to show her how he felt through writing if he was unable to do it to her face. The curly haired boy had attempted this method with Suzie, the girl he'd been crushing on ever since he arrived to the science camp, and surprisingly, it worked. So he recommended it to a reluctant Steve.

Once his break ended, Robin ringed the bell for Steve to get his ass out of the backroom. Fumbling with the paper he poured his heart into, the former King of Hawkins High jumped to his feet, and gently shoved the card into his sailor shorts pocket.

Once the door swung closed behind him, Robin's eyes fell on Steve. "What were you doing, Dingus?"

"Uhh... Nothing." Steve terribly lied, stopping behind the counter. Robin, by the cashier, rolled her eyes, not caring.

However, her eyes soon caught sight of something sticking out of Steve's pocket. This time it wasn't his scooper that had her attention but a piece of paper that looked like a card.

"What you got there?" She asked, curious.

Steve followed her gaze. He berated himself when he saw what held her attention. He was quick to shove the card he had inside a book he had on the counter. "Nothing." He replied, feeling slightly panicked.

It was a rather dull thing to get hung up over, but with her hyper personality, when something really caught her interest, Robin was not one to be easily swayed. "Relax, I won't make fun of you." She said raising a hand. "Sailor's honor."

Steve stared at her taking in her facial features. Not a single feature she had held anything that made him not trust her. Despite her tendency to make fun of him, he felt a sense of security with the blonde girl, so he reached for the piece of paper and carefully handed it to her.

He grew nervous as she began to silently read it.

*Your hair burns like rays of the sun. I see, and I am lit. For you are beautiful beyond compare, The girl with crystal clear eyes and fire for hair.*

Robin felt a sense of serenity go through her after reading the card.

Wow.

That was all Robin could think in her head. Steve actually wrote that? The *dingus* wrote that?

After a few seconds she was able to get a hold of herself. A light bulb went off in her head after re-reading the card again. Her gaze on him became unusually soft. "Is this for who I think it is?" She asked him, excited to hear his reply.

It had to be for Jean. It just had to.

Steve shook his head. "No." He lamely said. However, the knowing look Robin was giving him made him give into the truth. Like before he just felt like he could trust her with this. He ended up nodding his head "Yes." He answered her, lowering his eyes.

"How'd you know?" He asked.

"It's obviously about a redhead, so it was either her or Carol."

'Barf' Steve thought, visibly cringing. He didn't like to be reminded of Carol or Tommy Halos who were his former friends, not the company you want to keep. The thought of dating that shallow, rotten and selfish and self-absorbed girl literally disgusted him.

"You like Jean." Going back to the main topic, Robin realized with a smile. For some reason, in the inside she was gushing at Steve's feelings for the girl.

"That's actually kinda sweet. Now I understand why you had all those poetry books. I thought you had 'em in display to impress the *ladies*." She handed her coworker the piece of paper back. He received the card, his gaze still lowered in sheer embarrassment.

"It's really good, dingus. I'm sure she'll love it."

Steve "The Hair" Harrington actually *blushed* as he took hold of the card. He hid it inside his back pocket and then looked towards her again.

A dejected expression was to be seen in his face. "I hope so."

"Why didn't you sign your name on it?" Robin asked him. The bottom of the card just said 'secret admirer'.

The ice cream slinging girl was confused as to why he didn't want to take credit for his confessed feelings. Let alone not want to let Jean know it had been him who wrote her such lovely words.

"Because I don't think she likes me the same way." Steve replied, dispirited.

Robin could hear the disappointment in his tone of voice. She herself knew how it was to like someone who had no idea of their feelings towards them. Thinking about Tammy Thompson made Robin feel immeasurable sadness.

Not wanting to fall into depression, now of all moments, she fought to move through it and gave Steve a quick encouraging pat on the shoulder.



"Chin up." She said, lightening her voice a bit. The former popular guy sent her a suspicious look, unused to a non-sarcastic and condescending way of speaking coming from the girl.

"Just remember that in the end the underdog always wins." Although she was saying this to him, in a way she was also saying it to herself.

Robin could not believe she was consoling the great King Steve, the douchebag that never appreciated anything that came to him on a silver platter. But as she got to know him through their mutual daily job, she'd realized that Steve had lost his sense of self. Aside from his sarcasm and recklessness, a lot of his traits that he displayed in his high school years have disappeared from him. So, it was all too easy to sympathize with him.

"Oh, so I'm an underdog?" Despite cheering up, he looked incredulous at what she has come to call him.

"Look around you." She replied, prompting him to roam his eyes around the ice cream place and their stupid uniforms. "You are now."

Night time had rolled around. A day spent with the youngest Sinclair had proved to tire Jean out.

Jean had never mentioned her drowning incident at the pool to anyone, finding it was best to not make a big deal out of it. Of course, the occasional thoughts on the what the hell happened back there would find her way into Jean Grey's head and she would always manage to end up without an answer.

After visiting the Regis Hairstylists at Starcourt along with Erica and her friends, Jean would be concluding her daily mall visits upon entering the ice cream parlor. Erica Sinclair and her peers just couldn't get enough of the free samples.

Steve had proven himself to be positively busy with the cashier after a customer left. His nose crinkled as he pressed at various buttons in confusion at the machine. He was sure that no matter how many times would pass with him working here, he would never get the hang of it.

The brown haired male was so preoccupied that he didn't notice Jean's entry along with the group of kids.

Growing frustrated at the lack of service, Erica irritably pressed the bell on the counter a multitude of times.

"Ahoy!" Steve Harrington frantically greeted, surprised from the abrupt sound. He looked up and find a bemused Jean and moody young girls here for their daily dose of frozen sugar.

A wide smile worked Jean's lips as she took in the boy's mild (pleasant) surprise at her presence. "Well, ahoy to you, too, Sailor Steve."

Steve chuckled at her words, a timorous hand placed over the counter. "Hey, you." Steve properly greeted, with that large smile still drawn along his lips.

Jean's lips stretched even further, her pearly white teeth on display. She'd missed the goofy brown haired guy, even though they saw each other every other day, it had been a while since they properly hung out.

Smiling at one another, her beautiful green eyes on his brilliant brown ones, Steve tuned out his surroundings. This was the kind of relationship he wanted, he thought. With Jean; the person who could make him feel like all the tiredness of his day were being washed off just by a quick look at her, even if she didn't make his heart flutter every second.

Not missing the exchange between both teenagers, Erica grew nauseated and rolled her eyes, before thinking of using this to her advantage. "Can't you convince your boyfriend to give us free ice cream or something?"

The Sinclair girl's usual loud voice from beside Jean seemed to break whatever spell the redhead's eyes had cast on him and Steve jumped back, very aware of how hot his cheeks were feeling.

With an uneasy gulp, Steve gathered the courage to speak. "What?" Nervous chuckles left his wide open mouth, he stammered. "Uhh, w-

what?"

Jean shook her head, growing flustered for reasons unknown to her. It wasn't the first time they were mistaken for a couple, so why did she feel like she was blushing at Erica Sinclair's inquiry. "Yeah, we're not-"

Steve's eyes were widening in panic at the ten year old's expectant gaze at them both. "Yeah, definitely NOT-" He denied vigorously, his voice raising significantly at the end causing the store dwellers to look at him with curiosity. "... Together." He trailed off, faking a shudder and a sound of distaste.

Jean was slightly offended, but she didn't show it. He didn't have to phrase it like *that*.

The ten year old raised her hand to signal them to cease from talking, it was disturbing how fidgety they've become -especially Steve.

"Don't get your panties in a twist, because frankly I don't wanna hear about how much you hate thought of dating her." She exclaimed, nodding her head to the much taller girl.

"What? No, I..." Steve's eyes widened. He quickly went over what he said in his head. After thoroughly thinking it over, he let out a huff. Damn this kid for twisting his words. Although it was his own fault. He should have thought carefully with what he had to say before speaking. Especially in front of Jean. But he was flustered. Steve looked at the telepath, his cheeks feeling hot from embarrassment. "Well, uh..." He gulped, nervously.

As much as she wanted to say it was no big deal, Jean was curious to hear what he would say to her. The longer she waited the more awkward silence began to fill the air. It was the only thing that could be heard...well other than Robin's low snickering. Unknown to Jean this only caused Steve to throw his coworker a discreet type of glare. Just as she was about to say something herself, a soft voice beat her to it.

"Well, *I* would be honored to date you." Robin said coming to the rescue, approaching the counter to stand by Steve.

It was a surprise to Jean that Robin had been the one to end the awkwardness, saying what she said despite being a girl, but Jean smiled at her nonetheless. "Thanks, Robin."

The blonde nodded her head at her before averting her eyes away, sticking out her tongue to tease Steve.

From the side, Steve was inwardly berating himself at how lame he was being.

"Weirdos." Erica muttered, eating the free sample that Robin reluctantly handed to her.

The redhead stared longingly at the nautical three-scoop sundae before her. It had U.S.S. Butterscotch, Chocolate, and Very Berry Strawberry ice cream on deck - all topped off with three waffle cone sails. It was a Scoops Ahoy classic.

"This looks almost too good to eat." Jean grinned at Steve who offered her the treat. "Almost."

"Yeah? Well, go nuts." Steve said, placing an extra serving of crushed nuts by her, his cheeks notched upwards as he uttered the pun.

Jean stifled a laugh and shook her head at Steve's adorable idiocy. After Erica's mom came to pick her up, Jean stayed with Steve. The two of them were alone in the back room, while Robin was stuck outside scooping ice cream because Steve decided to take his break and be with the redhead.

"So, what are you doing tomorrow?" Steve queried, hoping that if she was free he could take the day off and hang out with her. In fact with his job and hers, he saw less of Jean and he longed for a day with her.

"Going to the community pool." Jean replied, spooning some of the (free) heavenly treat into her mouth and she relished at its coolness.

"Why?" He whined, Jean could swear that with that uniform on and his childish tone, he seemed like a child whining to his mother.

"I'm gonna be watching over Erica." She replied while giggling.

Steve slicked his hair back, elbows supported on the cold metal table. "I have a perfectly good pool at my house, you know that, right?" He desperately suggested, hoping she wouldn't go.

It was all because Billy Hargrove was working as lifeguard there.

"And Erica has about ten chaotic friends that are barely allowed anywhere, do you know that?" Jean announced. She was scared that if she brought them to his house, with no restrictions from the rules of the community pool, then all hell would break loose.

Steve groaned.

Then before he could protest even further, Robin's voice blared through the honeycomb-patterned window. "Hey, dingus, your children are here!"

"I think that's for you." Jean bemusedly indicated to the boy.

Harrington sighed, before getting up to his feet and walking to the partition. Jean curiously watched him from where she was seated as he slid the window open, his shoulders slumping. "Again? Seriously?"

To her mild astonishment, Max, Mike, Will and Lucas -of course, excluding poor El who was stuck at home and Dustin still in camp Nowhere- walked into the room in a rush, the door swinging closed behind them. "Hey, Jean." The four teens chorused.

Jean smiled at the group. "Hi, guys."

The other redhead approached her, happy to see her after a while of her absence. She knew she was preoccupied with the whole babysitting gig, but Max was growing tired of hanging with boys all the time.

"What are you guys doing here?" Jean asked as Steve stood by them, his hands placed against his hips.

"Catching a movie." Was Max's response, her eyes crinkling with happiness to see Jean after a while.

"Which we're insanely late to!" Lucas interjected, sighing in

frustration. "Come on!" He exclaimed, walking up to Maxine and holding her hand to drag her along with them.

Jean's eyebrows could only scrunch in confusion at where the hell they went. That was not the way to the theater, she thought.

"Where did you just take them?" She curiously asked Steve once he returned.

"Oh, there's a secret passage from the back to the movie theater." After plopping by Jean's side, Steve answered.

"Are you mad?" He asked after seeing Jean tilting her head. The Scoops Ahoy employee knew that -from a technical aspect- what he was doing, sneaking in a group of kids every other night, was morally wrong.

Jean scoffed, here she was, eating ice cream that she didn't pay for, why would she judge what he did?

"Why would I be mad? If anything I'm a little jealous you've been holding out this life hack on me." She mused, eliciting a chuckle from Steve.

Realizing how late it must be getting, and the fact that Mike Wheeler was in the movies and no longer occupying the small space of Eleven's room, Jean announced, "I should get going."

"Why the rush? My shift ends in a bit, I could take you."

Jean brushed her crimson hair back, smiling at Steve's offer. "Yeah, sure. That'd be nice."

Seeing something on the wall that peaked her interest, Grey got off the chair and walked up to the board with the tally marks decorating it. She had her back to Steve and the boy's eyes darted nervously from her figure to her bag that was on the metal table. So he carefully and sneakily brought out the letter he wrote and crept into her bag.

"It's been bothering me for a while, but that board needs context." Jean said, giving him a flinch and he abruptly tore his hand out of

her bag before she turned around to look at him.

"Huh?" Steve asked, not quite paying attention at what she'd said, his mind bombarding with thoughts on how she would've reacted had she seen him slip that card in.

"Are you guys keeping score for something?"

Steve sighed at the board he loathed with a passion. "Uhh.. No, it's absolutely nothing. I mean it's probably Robin's. I don't know what that is." He rambled, denying any possibility that all the 'You Suck' lines were actually meant for him.

After getting scolded by Robin to get out and finish up the miserable minutes left on with their shift, a reluctant Steve unwillingly left Jean -who was reading a book to pass the time- in the quiet backroom.

The redhead appreciated the moment of silence enveloping her. It'd been a while since she was alone; spending her days with Erica and her nights with a giddy, lovesick Eleven.

Then out of nowhere, the lights went out.

Jean jolted in her chair, eyes flickering around in desperate need to find her lost sight. From the sound of it, it was a complete power outage because the music and noise that had been booming throughout the mall had been cut off as well.

"Jean, you alright in there?" Steve's voice broke the silence and Jean was grateful to hear him.

"Yeah, I'm good." She called out, her eyes beginning to adjust to the darkness. But a few moments later, her words proved to be null.

Goosebumps prickled across the back of Jean's neck. A headache was hitting her. Dizziness, too.

There was an unvoiced strangeness that wandered through Hawkins, that was rooted into the thick woods and bordered the town.

And Jean sensed it.

Once the power was back, the feeling had completely vanished. She couldn't even feel remnants of it anymore and she couldn't figure out what had caused it. But it felt wrong. *Unbelievably wrong.*

**A/N:-Aaaand we're finally in season 3! \*relieved breath\* I didn't think we were gonna make it**Feedback is always welcomed!



## 13. CHAPTER 12

### Chapter 12: The Date And Dash

JEAN turned in her bed, a moan escaping her lips, her eyes squeezed shut.

*'You have more power than you can imagine, Jean. The question is, will you control that power, or let it control you?' A man's voice echoed in the depths of Jean's subconscious, all the while images flashed before her. The images themselves were indescribable, they were more like a feeling. Like they represented a growing power. Like fire. The scene shifted entirely, it wasn't as jumbled as its predecessor. This time she had a clear view of an entity; a gargantuan one, being at least 50 stories tall. Its body appeared to be entirely composed of minuscule particles, giving it a misty appearance akin to a shadow. The creature had multiple limbs, some of which branched into several smaller appendages; these limbs resembled tendrils. Its presence was accompanied by unnatural red lightning and it boomed with thunderclap. BOOM!*

That morning, Jean woke up abruptly. She sat on the bedclothes of the bed, her heart beating at an abnormal speed and a layer of cold sweat covering her pale forehead almost completely.

Jean tried to calm her breathing once more and this time, she succeeded. She took both her hands to her face and rubbed it with some brusqueness, trying so the nightmare would dissipate from her mind.

She jolted when she heard the bedroom door screeching open, revealing Eleven with a toothbrush hanging from her mouth. "..Good morning."

Gulping harshly, Jean ran a hand through her long hair before she stuttered out a reply. "M-morning."

Taking note of the disheveled state of the older girl, El removed the toothbrush from between her lips, looking her over in concern. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing's wrong." She shook her head, swinging her long legs over the edge of the bed.

"Jean," Eleven started, and Jean turned to see her approaching until she stopped in front of her.

"Yeah?"

"Friends don't lie." Eleven affirmed, her brown eyes meeting Jean's.

Jean allowed a deep breath to escape from her mouth. "I'm not lying. I just... had a nightmare is all."

El pursed her lips. "Sorry." She muttered before wrapping a hand around Jean's shoulders, her smaller hand gently patting her back. The redhead found the act strangely soothing.

"Better?" Eleven asked, her voice gentle, it elicited the smile on Jean's lips.

"Better."

The fun in the water continued for Erica Sinclair and her friends.

Even after the water fight they had between them, splashing and joyful laughter filled the air.

At one point, Tina got on top of Erica's shoulders and two of their other friends did the same. Jean acted as referee amusingly watching the chicken fight play out. The ten year olds laughed as they tried pushing each other off. Eventually it had been Erica who succeeded in winning the game. The dark haired girl popped out of the water next to Jean and gave the green eyed female a victorious smile.

Jean cheered loudly and swam closer to give the Sinclair girl a high five. The latter eagerly reached to give her such gesture but was surprised when Jean grabbed her hand and swiftly pulled her into the water.

Everyone laughed at seeing their sassy friends fall into the water. When Erica finally got back up to the surface she gave her babysitter a fake serious expression. "I'm so gonna get you for that." She told her

and then started swimming her way.

Jean's response was a smile. Although she knew Erica was kidding with her threat -she hoped, the red haired girl still swam away from her.

When Jean reached the edge of the pool, she was about to heave herself out of the water when a shadow fell over her.

A person spoke to her, his voice was the same but it had a different effect on Jean ever since his act of rescue. It now spent a rush through her blood, left her with a tugging, weird sensation low in her abdomen.

"Be careful there," Billy bemusedly warned, Jean looked up to find him smirking at her. "Wouldn't want another incident happening on my watch."

"For your information, I can swim just fine." She huffed out, running her hand back through her wet hair.

"Then why were you drowning?" He retorted, raising his blonde eyebrows at her as he waited for an answer.

"I was..." Jean trailed, biting her lip, still unable to make sense of the incident that transpired days ago, what she'd seen. It was still a mystery to her. "-distracted." She finished, the word being the closest she was to describing what happened.

"Thank you." Billy joked. He offered out his hand and Jean reluctantly took it, allowing him to easily pull her out of the water, like she weighed nothing to him and she probably did.

Water slipped down her frame, leaving a puddle around her, her skin slick and glossy. Wet crimson hair draped over shoulders.

Jean huffed at his conceited assumption that it was his gorgeous self that distracted her. "Not by you." She could see the blonde lowering his irises a fraction to run his gaze over Jean's figure, taking in her blue and white striped swimsuit.

"Right..." There was a playful quality to his words that prompted a

laughter to rumble in Jean's chest.

Th lifeguard had to admit. There was something entrancing about her laugh. And immediately, almost out of reflex, his eyes went to her rosy petal lips. He wasn't sure if she remembered the fact that he gave her mouth-to-mouth in a desperate attempt to resuscitate her. All he knew was that his lips wanted the pressure of hers again and his golden skin almost screamed to be graced with her soft fair skin that the sun didn't seem to affect. He wanted her more than he ever wanted any girl before.

Billy licked his lips, his blue eyes scanning the perimeters for any incident that warranted any lifeguard business before guiding them back on Jean Grey. "You know, I can give you swimming lessons if you like." He offered with a smug smirk.

"Uh-huh." Jean muttered, she looked unimpressed at his flirtatious method.

Seeing her reaction, Billy's lips lifted further upwards. "*Strictly* for safety measures, of course." He lightheartedly added.

"Of course." The redhead played along, nodding in amusement. Her voice dripped with sweet sarcasm, eyebrows notching upwards as Billy's odd charm shined through.

"I know all the styles; backstroke, freestyle, butterfly.." He trailed off. Water droplets glided down the skin of Jean's neck over her exposed chest, and Billy's eyes lazily followed its path as it graced her fair skin and disappeared between the valley of her breasts. "*Breaststroke.*"

"I think I'll pass." Jean announced, twirling around to leave but was quickly stopped by his voice before she could take a step away.

"You know you still haven't paid me back for saving your life." Jean turned to find Billy sending her an innocent pout, and lightly batted his long lashes at the peeved teenager.

The green eyed teen perked her eyebrows at him. "What?"

"Come to think of it, you barely even thanked me."

She scoffed. She did thank him, and all he said was to not worry about it. So why was he milking it now?

"Isn't that part of your job description?" Jean retorted. But seeing as Billy stood his ground, smirking expectantly at her, she gave in.

"Fine, what do you want?"

Billy's smirk quickly fell, his blue eyes were glazed over with pure want and... something akin to adoration. "You." He asked in a low voice that shimmered with hope.

Jean coiled back at his suggestive answer. "Come again?" She muttered, offended.

Billy inhaled sharply. "A *date*.. with you tonight." His eagerness got the better of him had gotten the better of him. And the blonde hoped to god that she didn't notice the desperation in his tone. It was a first for him being this flustered when asking a girl out.

"I-uh, I don't know.." Jean stammered, flabbergasted at his request. She gulped, feeling nervous under his gaze. He looked at her in a way that differed from the lust-filled glances she was used to receiving from him. So she averted her glance down for a second and her eyes caught the golden necklace wrapped around Billy's neck. It shone with the sunlight and Jean realized that the pendant portrayed the Virgin Mary, a very common type of talisman among catholics. Which only surprised Jean when she'd noticed it because Billy didn't seem like the type to be wearing religious medals. But he *always* wore that pendant for reasons unknown to her.

The red haired teenager grasped the fact that she hadn't given Billy a reply just yet as he looked at her expectantly.

"Wouldn't you rather go with one of these moms who are so obsessed with you?" Jean blurted out of nowhere to gain some time in thinking of what to say to his request. She referred to the blonde's flirty and downright inappropriate demeanor towards the older women that came to the pool especially for him.

Billy didn't miss the sharpness in Jean's words and laughed in

satisfaction. "Jealousy is so hot on you." He remarked.

Jean gasped at his presumptuous statement. "I'm *not* jealous." She wasn't jealous, she was stating the obvious, she thought.

Billy chuckled. While Jean still looked conflicted about his earlier proposition.

"C'mon, just one date." He drawled out. The voice sent hot shivers down Jean's spine. "You said you were here if I needed you.." Billy dipped in closer, dragging his eyes down her body before flashing them up to capture her eyes.

"To *talk*." Jean asserted, making sure he didn't misunderstand her words from weeks prior. After going into his head and feeling his pain, Jean had wanted to help him through it all in a strictly friendly manner, but he never took her up on her offer.

"Yes, to talk, Jean." He maintained, holding back the urge to roll his eyes. He looked her straight in the eyes, his ocean blue irises meeting her bright green ones.

The red haired girl was positively surprised to hear him calling her by name, and so softly at that. He practically never used her name, usually just using her last name or pet names like 'dollface' or 'babe'. It made her doubt if he's been using them to dodge the fact that he'd forgotten her name or something.

"Yeah?"

Sighing, Jean tore her gaze from him to look over at the snickering Erica who was still at the pool as an excuse to stop looking at his beautiful face. "Fine." She relented, closing her eyes. She shook her head, unbelieving that she was agreeing.

Once her eyes landed back on him, Jean almost gapped. That was the first time she'd seen him smile, like a genuine smile. "Good. I'll call you."

Unable to resist the urge, Jean smiled back at him. "You don't have my number."

Billy's lips pulled into a smirk as he reached for the whistle around his neck. "Yeah, I do." He said before turning around and walking back to his lifeguard post.

Jean stood there for a good minute, wondering what the hell she just agreed to.

Jean had taken Erica and her friends to Tina's after the pool visit, because (thankfully) all the playing they did at the pool had tired them out.

The redhead then took the bus to Starcourt because she needed to buy some a dress for the date she still didn't believe she consented to.

Afterwards, she got what she found to be the right outfit for her, and then Jean went to see her best friend, Steve Harrington.

"I'm scared I'm gonna get diabetes because of you." Jean jokingly sighed as she ate the ice cream he so nicely prepared for her. She saw him dedicating her one of his bright smiles that had always prompted her to reciprocate the expression. The two sat across from each other at one of the customer tables at the Scoops Ahoy.

"You'll be fine, I promise." He assured with a chuckle, raising his arm to support his elbow on the table, his gaze directed downwards.

Jean's eyes narrowed slightly when she realized that he'd been avoiding eye contact with her ever since she walked in the place. She would've read his mind to know what was up if it wasn't such a huge invasion of privacy.

Gulping harshly, Steve tried to cleanse his mind of any thoughts that regarded the love letter he slipped into her bag. He was nervous and fidgety at the prospect of her reading it and suspecting it was him. If she didn't feel the same way (and he would bet that she didn't), their friendship wouldn't be the same. And that terrified him.

"Where your kids at?" He asked out of nowhere, referring to Erica and her group of annoying friends. Jean just shrugged with a teasing smile. "I could ask you the same thing."

Steve gasped. "How could you ask that when you know it's such a

tough subject for me?"

Jean released a short laughter knowing how much he'd missed the little Henderson. "Dustin?"

"Yeah, he should be here any day now." He replied, crossing his fingers. He was grateful that the conversation was taking his mind off of that card of love confession.

"Well, it's been a fun month without him since I got you all to myself." She said with a jokingly flirtatious smile, her eyelashes batting at him.

"Yeah, well, lucky you."

Steve knew she didn't mean it in the way that he wanted her to, but despite the joking manner, she said it truthfully and he just looked at her. It was times like these that Steve really thought she might feel something for him other than friendship. He just didn't want to risk anything by confronting her about that. He sighed sharply.

"By the way, are you free tonight?" Steve queried and he saw Jean stiffen.

"Um, no, actually." She mumbled, playing the spoon in her hand. She hoped to god he wouldn't ask her about her plans for the night. Which only raised the question; *why* didn't she want him to find out about her date with Billy. Her heart raced as she tried to think about it.

"Why, what are you doing?"

She swallowed nervously, looking down as she lied to her friend. "Playing board games with Hopp."

The brown haired boy's face morphed with an incredulous look. "Seriously?"

Jean bit her lip, feeling worse as she continued on with the lie. Maybe it was a betrayal to go on a date with the guy her friend hated with a passion. But it was a one time thing. She sent him a short nod. "Yeah, it distracts him from El and Mike's constant saliva swapping."



"Ew." Steve cringed at the description. His face relaxed a few moments later and he slicked his luscious hair back. "Come on." He urged and Jean sent him a quizzical glance. "Can't we just catch a movie or something tonight? I *miss you*."

Jean's eyes went wide at his soft and almost pleading voice, and she could feel the breath hitching in her throat as his eyes bored into hers.

Realizing how he sounded, Steve shook his head before bringing the palm of his hand to rub his chin. "I-I mean that I miss when it's just the two of us."

After he muttered those words, Robin appeared, peaking her head up from one of the adjacent chairs. She was lounging not too far away from them since the store was empty. "*Hey*, I thought we were having a magical time." She sarcastically said, eliciting a chuckle from Jean.

"Sorry." She apologized to Steve who had still looked hopeful. "Next time, I promise."

It was a calm and balmy night and the roads in Hawkins, Indiana were decently quiet.

Jean was surprised when Billy called and declared that he would be picking her up without telling her where they'd be going. When she asked him, she could practically hear him smirking over the phone and telling her it was a surprise.

Hopper and Jean sat together for a while -watching TV- until Jean excused herself to begin getting ready. Of course, she didn't declare her real plans for the evening, seeing as she could remember the dislike Hopper bared for Billy Hargrove ever since their first meeting. She knew for a fact that Jim had nothing to worry about, even if it was a 'date' with Billy. She didn't know if she should call it that. The two of them rarely talked to one another, then he asked her out of nowhere.

It was confusing.

"Relax, it's just a one time thing." Jean blew out lowly under her

breath as she pulled her hair back into a bun. She shook her head and took a glance at her reflection in the mirror before applying some makeup on her face. Jean released a heavy breath, she could feel her hands growing clammy as she tried to reason with herself.

What she thought at first was that Billy Hargrove wasn't one to do dates and romance, so naturally, she was stunned when he asked her out. She didn't know what to expect from the attractive boy. But as flirty and seductive as Billy was, she knew he wouldn't try and force her into anything she was uncomfortable with.

It was just a date, and although she couldn't remember herself dating before, she figured it wouldn't be such a big deal. She hoped.

But why the hell was she so nervous.

On her way out, Jean nervously walked into the living room, hoping that she wouldn't get caught, but her wish didn't come true.

"Where you going all dressed up?" Hopper asked, looking up from a piece of paper in his hand as he walked out of his room.

She paused for a moment. "I'm going out with Steve." Jean replied, and she immediately felt incredibly bad for using him as an excuse, especially because he did ask to hang out with him and she lied to him, too.

Hopp looked at the time to find it was eight o'clock, and he inspected the floral dress she wore. "Is it a date?"

Raising her eyebrows in surprise, Jean shook her head. "What? "No, it's just a friendly thing."

Hopper didn't look like he believed her, but he shrugged in the end. She was an adult, and she was way more mature for her age than all the teenagers he knew. He trusted her. "Okay. Well have fun." He mumbled, looking back at the speech he and Joyce practiced all morning. Jean was taken aback slightly at his reluctance, but just shrugged, relieved that he wasn't as pissed as she expected him to be.

Thirty minutes went by and Jean moved from the front door outside in the warm air. She anxiously played with the hem of her dress, eyes

on the lookout for any indication that a car was nearing by.

After another ten minutes, Jean had lost any excitement for the night she thought was about to unfold. Having enough of the disappointment and the mosquitoes feeding on her, she finally pulled herself up and walked inside, slamming the door shut.

She felt utterly foolish and vexed by Billy Hargrove.

*Poor poor Billy.*

**A/N:-I just wanted to thank anyone following and reviewing (all four of you XD) this story! Feedback is what motivates me to write faster, so please, tell me what you think of the story so far! Thanks again XD-Tebocchi**

## 14. CHAPTER 13

### Chapter 13: A Nightmare On Cherry Lane

*SHADOWS hovered in every corner of the place. Black strangling veins snaked across the floor, looking for life to drain.*

*Darkness was seeping into Billy's skin, crawling down his throat. A looming figure took him whole, drowning him in a sea of black and muffling his screams.*

A violent jolt woke Jean suddenly, and her eyes saw nothing but darkness this time. The window told her that the night was already rising, since the moonlight shone subtly through El's draped window.

Jean sat on the bed, feeling dizzy up to her head and knew at the moment that she could sleep no more that night. The dream had dissipated from her head and nerves wrapped around her. She took with her right hand the blanket that covered her body and quietly turned herself, careful not to wake Eleven. And then stood up before going to the door and opening it slowly, trying not to make too much noise.

The faint light that the lambs irradiated managed to blind her for a few moments, promoting her to squint.

The nervous Jean Grey looked both ways down the living room, and when she didn't see Hopper, she closed the door behind her and walked straight ahead, planning to go outside so she could finally breathe fresh air.

When Jean decided to call the Hargrove-Mayfield residence the next morning, she was reluctant at first. But she couldn't shake off the dreary feeling she had concerning the boy who ditched her the night before. She was worried that he wasn't okay.

At first, she had wanted nothing to do with Billy after he decided to stand her up with no phone nor an apology, but the nightmare she had concerning him felt so real that she felt physically anxious for him.

So she dialed the number and called.

Max had answered, and was surprised to find that Jean asked for Billy instead. The fourteen year old, despite being shocked at the request, told her that Billy left for his job at the pool.

Max's answer left Jean with the conclusion that Billy Hargrove was indeed okay. So he really just ditched her for no good reason.

She felt foolish for placing such high hopes on the damaged blonde.

All Jean's self berating got even worse when Max said that he was out late the night before, probably on a 'hot date with some girl'.

Max had speculated it was a date because she'd seen how well groomed Billy's appearance was when he left, and he had a smile that literally freaked her out from how wide and genuine it was.

She had no clue it was Jean he was going to pick up.

So, Jean naturally assumed that Billy stood her up for someone else. Perhaps a girl who was willing to do..*things* that Jean in no way had any intention of doing on a first date. She knew it, he knew it, so he just dropped her, probably.

So all her concern for him dissipated, and was replaced with distaste for the seductive lifeguard.

Currently, Jean Grey was at the mall with Erica.

The green eyed girl had to force her self to act happy and cheerful, even though being stood up by Billy Hargrove had soured her mood tremendously. Sleep hadn't cured her acidic mood either, seeing as nightmares didn't cease infiltrating her sleep cycle.

"I want the peanut butter chocolate swirl next." Erica sassily demanded of Robin Buckley who looked like she was on her way to write a suicide note.

Jean breathed harshly through her nose, slowly growing irritated at Erica's persistence. She was literally abusing the Scoops Ahoy company policy. "For godsakes, order an ice cream. *I'll* pay for it." The

babysitter offered, wanting to end hers and Robin's misery.

Erica snapped her head in Grey's direction, pursing her lips. "It's not about the money, it's about my rights as a customer." She argued, sounding like an adult as she did most of the time. She really was a precocious kid.

"Okay." Jean muttered in disbelief, rolling her eyes at the younger girl.

Seeing the slightest change in Jean's attitude, Erica narrowed her eyes at Jean. "What's up with you?"

"Nothing." Jean said under her breath. "Sorry, Robin." She apologized to the blonde who gave her a slight smile.

"Not your fault." Robin reassured as best as she could. She pitied Jean, having to deal with the pushy Erica Sinclair. With her lack of patience, Robin knew she couldn't last a day with a job like that.

"Where's Steve by the way?"

"He's cramped up inside rekindling an old flame."

Jean Grey didn't know what to make of that answer. "What?"

After reluctantly handing Erica another free sample, the girl-in-band shrugged. "Some kid named Dustin came this morning and they've been inseparable ever since, whispering into each other's ears like a couple of brainless teenage girls."

Jean smiled. Finally, Steve's other half had come home from camp. She had to stop the laughter that rumbled on the inside as she tried to picture their reunion scene.

Deciding that seeing the sweet young boy would lift her spirit, Jean headed straight to the backroom, leaving an aggravated Robin with the provocative Erica.

The redhead walked in to see Steve and Dustin seated, fumbling with a book. There was a slight look of panic on their faces when they heard the door swinging open, but they visibly relaxed upon seeing

who it was.

"Hey, Dustin." Jean greeted the fourteen year old, who in turn ran to her and gave her a quick hug.

"Jean!"

With a wide smile matching his, Jean brought her hand up to ruffle Dustin's lovely curls. "Welcome home. El told me they were planning a party for you yesterday, I'm sorry I couldn't make it."

The Henderson's smile fell. "Yeah, they planned it then ditched me, talking about a '*curfew*'." Dustin scrunched his face in sullen defeat, imitating quotation marks with his hands as he uttered the word '*curfew*' with disbelief.

Jean frowned, the poor boy being ditched by his friends tugged at her heartstrings. She kinda knew how he felt at the moment. "Yeah, they've been inseparable all summer. To be honest, a part of me wished I had a summer love like that."

"You do?" Steve uttered, his eyes hopeful. Him and Dustin exchanged glances, it was brief, but it made Jean wondrous at their non-verbal communication, especially when she saw the smirk on Dustin's face.

Could she have been touched by Harrington's love letter? Both Steve and Dustin wondered, but they didn't know that Jean still haven't found it yet. The piece of paper shoved into the bottom of her messy bag.

When they both then turned to her expectantly, Jean realized that it was her turn to talk. "Just a little bit." She smiled, gesturing with her hand. It was safe to say she'd be sleeping on the idea of dates after what Billy pulled on her.

"Well, I'm sorry it *can't* be me. I've found someone else." Dustin sighed defeatedly. His words made Jean look at him in confusion. "Huh?"

Turns out, Jean was stupid enough to not realize the crush the younger boy had developed on her, ever since they first met.

Steve ran his hand across his face up to his hair as he slicked it

backwards all while Dustin spoke. "I just couldn't wait around forever, Suzie is the one who owns my heart now."

"Suzie?"

"His camp girlfriend." Steve clarified, disbelief in his tone.

A wide grin worked its way up to Jean's face, promoting the same expression on Dustin's. "Aww, I'm happy for you." Jean said, feeling her bottom lip begin to turn yet up, she let out the most obnoxious yet genuine 'aw' sound. And Dustin felt his cheeks beginning to burn as he remembered his perfect girlfriend.

"So what have guys been up to?" The telepathic redhead questioned, her curiosity resurfacing and seeping back into her after seeing a recorder placed on the center of the metal table.

"Oh, we're-" Steve went to answer truthfully but was quickly intercepted by Dustin, who sent him a sharp glare. "-Nothing." The curly haired boy replied in a rush, his lax smile morphing into a nervous one. "Just catching up."

Jean was about to express her disbelief at their words but she was quickly silenced by the sound of the customer bell ringing outside.

"I'll see you guys later." Jean mumbled before making her way outside.

*Saved by the bell*, Dustin thought, sighing in relief.

"Can I try the peppermint stick?"

"Haven't you already tried the peppermint stick?"

"Yes, and I'd like to try it *again*."

Both Jean and Robin let out a deep, frustrated breath.

The soles of Jean's shoes slapped against the pavement as she rounded the community pool, eyes scanning the crowd.

The Grey girl just couldn't let go of Billy's wrongdoing. It would have



been a whole different thing if she was the one who asked him out, but *he* was the one who chased after her, insisting that they go out. And after she finally gave in and prepared herself physically and mentally for their date, he was a no show.

So she intended to give him a piece of her mind once and for all.

Screams, splashes and music echoed across the place, and Jean spotted Billy making his way through the crowd of people, bumping his way back into the storage facility.

Jean exhaled sharply, her fury propelling her forward as she marched towards him. She was now at the side of the building, both of them isolated from the rest of the pool dwellers.

"Hey, asshole!" Jean shouted out, her voice booming. She found Billy fumbling with a couple of bottles on the shelf, his back to her.

"Why didn't you show up last night?" She demanded, eyes narrowed as she glared at the boy.

Seeing that Billy refused to face in her direction or at least acknowledge her presence, Jean was aggravated even further. Her patience snapped, arms crossed over her chest. "Fine, you don't want to talk me? Is it one of those 'the hunt is better than the kill' scenarios because if that's what it is then-"

He turned reluctantly and seemed surprised to see Jean there, almost like he didn't recognize her. "Jean?" He blinked, his brain rattled. He muttered her name, barely standing on his legs like he had no control over them.

She noticed that he was sweaty and his hair was a bit disheveled. While he'd used to be so overconfident and downright blunt, something had changed about his demeanor and Jean just couldn't put her finger on it. He just looked different, his voice sounded different.

"Are you okay?" She asked, her previous harsh glare losing its bite, face fell along with her anger.

*Take me to him, let him use me.*

"W-what?" He mumbled, trying to steady himself as the place began to spin for him.

"Billy, Billy, are you sick? Do you need me to take you to the infirmary?" Jean gently queried, her forehead wrinkling with concern, and guilt overtook her for having been upset with him.

She stepped forward, reaching out to brush his damp curl off his forehead so she could check his temperature.

A violent scene played in his mind, one that disturbed him greatly; he attacked Jean, slamming her body and head against the wall, his hands clawing at her neck as she gasped for air and lost consciousness.

He tried to shake his head, to rid himself of those violent thoughts that he knew *didn't* belong to him. That was his father, not him. He didn't want to do that to Jean. But the violence was contaminating him, like an ache he couldn't soothe.

"*Don't* touch me." He suddenly latched onto Jean's forearm, giving her a stun, his large fingers digging into her skin.

She noticed how Billy's muscles were tensed and coiled as if he was trying not to strike her. She gritted her teeth, her jaw locking and she angled her chin a little higher; she wasn't scared of him.

The telepathic girl tried to read his mind, to understand what the hell was going on. But as she attempted to prod through his head, an immense stabbing pain ensued in hers, like a force was pulsating and keeping her out.

His mind was as furious as a storm.

Jean whimpered, trying to escape his tough grasp. Despite his forceful nature, Billy had never been rough with her and she didn't know why he was acting this way now.

She was trembling on the inside, not from fear, that was already established. But it was as if Billy's current presence was set to trigger *something* in Jean; something that lay dormant within her, she was anxious that it felt like she wouldn't control if it surged out.

"Stay away from me, Jean." He warned as he twisted her forearm slightly, making her tear up, her lips parting in an array of emotions.

"Don't you *ever* come near me again, do you understand?" Pained tears dotted Billy's pale blue eyes, he didn't want the same feeling that sucked the life out of him to affect the warm sweet Jean. He wasn't going to take her down with him.

She crumpled at the force of his hand as the headache in her mind surged through her. She had no energy to answer him.

"I *said*, do you understand?!" He hissed out darkly.

All she could do was meekly nod her head.

His threatening touch broke from her, and he shoved her away before departing, stumbling outside to the scorching sun.

Watching him leave, Jean's heart and mind were shuddering. She supported herself against the brick wall, massaging her aching arm as tears gathered at the corner of her eyes.

She didn't understand what just happened, and she didn't want to.

She was done with Billy Hargrove.

**A/N:-Here we go! I'm in such a rush because I'm excited to reach where Jean kicks the Mind Flayer's butt at the end XD Thank you for the reviews! Please keep them coming :D**

## 15. CHAPTER 14

### Chapter 14: The Sleepover

WITH a deep sigh, the red haired girl got off the bus and made her way to Hopper's cabin.

She was taken aback to see Jim not occupying the living room as usual, but what really gave her a stun was the sight before her when she opened El's bedroom door.

"Hey, Jean." Max casually greeted, and El simply waved at Jean after looking up from a magazine. The two girls looked at her like it wasn't the weirdest thing in the world that they were suddenly laying in bed next to each other and sharing a magazine.

"Umm? Hi, guys." Jean hesitantly said, still genuinely surprised at the other redhead's presence.

"We're having... a *sleepover*." Eleven announced, the word seemingly foreign to her but she sounded ecstatic as she said it.

Placing her bag on the bedside table, Jean looked at the two younger girls, her brows raised. "Really?"

Max sat up from her lying position, crossing her legs. "Yeah, but I'm good with sleeping on the floor."

"Oh, no, you don't have to." Jean shook her head and was quick to reject the notion, prompting El and Max to look curiously at her. "Actually this is perfect because I'm staying at Sinclair's tonight."

"Why?" Max asked, pinching up her face.

Plopping down beside the two on the bed, Jean sighed. "Erica will be alone in the house because her parents are off to get their family for uncle Jack's party." She declared, shrugging at the end. To her knowledge, Lucas was set to sleep at the Wheeler residence for the night, while she was supposed to stay with his younger sibling. Jean didn't mind, since she was getting paid extra. Also, despite her cold exterior, Jean enjoyed Erica's company, and she liked to think the

same could be said for the ten year old.

Jean's green irises caught sight of the shopping bags labeled from 'the Gap' in the corner of the room. "Are those new clothes?" She asked, head slightly tilted to the side. She saw El's lips pursing and Max was quick to answer.

"Yeah, we went to the mall today."

Jean raised a shaply brow at the gutsy girls.

Both El and Jean knew that the redhead was meaning to take her to buy some new clothes, but she'd been so busy for the past few days that they kept delaying it. "You went shopping without me? I'm hurt." She joked, feigning being upset at Eleven. She was immediately riddled with guilt when she saw El looking down dejectedly.

"..Sorry."

"You don't have to be, I'm just messing with you." The tall girl shook her head, smiling. "You have good taste."

Her compliment made her reciprocate the lighthearted expression. "Thanks." She coyly said.

Her new style was really nice, Jean was sure Mike would love it. Speaking of which..

"So, no Mike tonight?" Looking at the time and Max's mysterious presence, Jean couldn't help but wonder what happened.

"We...broke up." El hesitantly said.

Jean frowned. "What happened?"

"He lied to her and said his Nana was sick when she wasn't." Max exclaimed, rolling her eyes at the mere thought of the Wheeler boy.

Seeing the dejected look on El's face, Jean placed a comforting touch on the heartbroken girl's hand. "I'm sorry. But maybe he had his reasons?"

"Doubtful." Max bit out.

Looking between the two redheads, Eleven repeated Maxine's words, imitating her in tone. "Yeah.. Doubtful."

"We saw him hanging out with Lucas at the mall." Max hissed.

Jean gasped. "Oh, no."

"Anywho, I'm glad you went to Max for advice instead of me." She mumbled with a downcast look.

Max's frown deepened. By the confused and troubled look on her face, she was positive that something happened. "Why, what's wrong?"

"I got ditched by my date last night." Closing her eyes, Jean confessed. While she was embarrassed to say so, she was also relieved to get the truth out of her chest.

"What?!" Both Max and El yelled in unison.

"By who? Steve?!" Max said unbelieving that the brown haired boy who had such an obvious crush on Jean would ditch her.

"No.." The telepath trailed off, feeling utterly stupid for even agreeing to go with him in the first place. It was probably just a game to him and once he got sick of her, he told her to stay away. And after what he'd done and said, she didn't anything to do with him either. "It was Billy."

Maxine made an *'oh'* face. "Wait, you had a date lined up with him?" She asked, thinking that Jean was too good for Billy.

Jean nodded shamefully.

Both girls held incredulous expressions as they gazed at Jean. "Why did he?" His stepsister questioned. It just didn't make sense to Max.

"I don't know. Maybe he's just not interested anymore."

Contemplating on Jean's words a moment, Max showcased her

disbelief. "Well, I thought he really liked you."

"W-what makes you say that?" The eighteen year old cursed herself for being flustered for that fraction of a second. He wouldn't have acted that way if he liked her.

"He sort of said your name in bed with a girl." The Mayfield girl revealed.

Jean didn't know what to make of that.

Eyes widen in sheer curiosity, El glanced to Max, her innocence preventing her from understanding how lewd that situation was. "Sleeping?"

Max and Jean cringed.

"...Something like that."

The Dig Dug champ hadn't witnessed the scene play out, it was about a week ago, but at the time she heard the distinct yelling of a girl Billy had been with. She was angrily asking who 'Jean' was and why he said her name when he was with her. When Billy failed to answer, the nameless girl stomped away, slamming the door behind her.

That night, Max laughed until she got a headache.

Jean resisted a shudder, she didn't even know how to feel about Max's words right now. So she chose to act as if she didn't hear them.

Still clueless as to what Max had meant, El didn't let go of the topic and she turned to Jean. "Is that why you couldn't sleep last night?" The brown haired girl asked, referring to the all nighter Jean pulled after waking up from a nightmare. When asked, Jean lied and said that she wasn't sleepy. In actuality, she was afraid of what she would see when she shuts her eyes.

"No, that was...something else." She mumbled.

The teenage telepath had premonitory dreams in the last days, though she falsely dismissed them as fragments of her imagination.

"Well, do you want El to spy on him and find out what he's up to?" Max suggested, a small smirk played on her lips. She still held the amusement from before when her friend went into the Void and checked what their boyfriends were up to.

Of course, Jean knew of Eleven's tele-communicative abilities. It was her experience with it that Eleven was able to coach Jean with her mind reading. The redhead had to admit, it was a pretty neat gift to have.

"No, I'm good." Jean said with a chuckle. Looking at the clock on the bedside table, she realized that she better head to Erica by now before her parents left. "I have to go now."

"Why? Can't you stay a bit longer?"

"Yeah, staay."

Jean was touched by both Max and Eleven's disappointment at the thought of her leaving. She quickly packed the stuff she needed to stay the night at another house and smiled sadly at them both. "I can't, I'm late. But maybe next time?"

"Totally." Max assured, her and El grinning at the older girl.

Exiting the room, Jean walked out to see Jim sleeping on the chair facing the TV. Her eyes softened when she approached his snoring form after she gently shut the bedroom door. She turned down the loud television and brought a blanket to cover him with.

Once she draped the piece of cloth over his out-cold figure, she saw him slightly shift, groaning as he did. He settled instantly, his mustache lifting with a sombre smile. "Night, Sarah." He mumbled, causing Jean's confusion. But she didn't have much time to think when she heard the sound of Mrs. Sinclair's car honking.

Groaning, Jean moved her head. Her green eyes flickering open when she couldn't recognize the scent of the pillow.

Nightmares were something that happened to Jean now quite often.

She tiredly sat up, and her bloodshot eyes traveled around the guest



bedroom. She threw the covers off her body and swung her long legs over the edge of the bed. Sighing at the cold feeling of wooden floorboards underneath her toes, Jean looked over to the alarm clock on the bedside counter and she heard the shower running. The Sinclair's would be arriving soon with their extended family.

The unfamiliar room glowed under the sun rays that shone through the glass windows and the transparent white drapes.

Quickly standing up from the bed, Jean picked up her rumpled clothes, tossed askew on the Sinclair's guest room floor. She moved over to the small armchair and plopped herself down on it, shoving her stuff into her bag.

Then she heard the shower stopping and then a minute later the bedroom door swung open.

Erica stood at the threshold, drying her hair with a pink towel. "You gonna take a shower or what?"

"Yeah, thanks. Your parents are on their way, right?" Jean asked before standing up and pulling her hair up into a loose bun.

"Yup." The ten year old confirmed before going back to her room.

Once Jean greeted Mrs. Sinclair and the rest of the family, she went straight home. But much to her disappointment, Jean found that there was no one there.

She frantically called out El's name, worried at her absence, but relief washed over her when she found a note explaining why she wasn't present. A smile crept up on Jean's features once she read that El and Max would be having another sleepover but at the Hargrove-Mayfield residence this time.

Jean was over the moon with their newly formed tight friendship.

Deciding to keep herself busy, Jean went with the idea to clean the cabin. Especially after drinking in her surroundings and seeing that the living room was a hot mess. There were kitchen magnets scattered all over the floor next to the fridge, which she found extremely odd, but she picked them up nevertheless.

As the Grey girl organized the place, she sighed. The cabin felt darker and emptier without the presence of Eleven in it and hardly a day had passed since she left.

While the redhead was taking her clothes out of her bag to launder them, a piece of paper fell out of the bag and flopped onto the wooden floors.

Perking a quizzical brow, Jean bent down and took the card in hand, wondering how this thing got in there. Figuring that it must've went in by mistake, Jean went to place it with the rest of the mail, but paused at her steps once she found that it was addressed to her.

So she read it.

*"There is no one else I'd rather be with.*

*You make me smile in a way no one else can.*

*You entered my heart slowly, quietly and passionately.*

*Your hair burns like rays of the sun.*

*I see, and I am lit.*

*For you are beautiful beyond compare,*

*The girl with crystal clear eyes and fire for hair."*

A heartwarming sensation overtook Jean. Her fingers smoothed out the surface of the paper, green irises skimmed the words slowly. Jean failed to notice that she was reading it over a couple of times, her lips, moving softly as she silently read the written words. A wide smile on her face.

It was the most passionate, honest and romantic thing anyone had ever addressed to her. She felt incredibly happy and loved, like she got the best gift ever.

Jean could only wonder who wrote such words, her heart was pounding at the mere thought.

She then looked over at the last line of the poem.

*"..fire for hair."*

Jean was only called that once; by Billy Hargrove at the party she was invited to a while back. She had a momentary doubt that it could've been him, but all the kindred thoughts that such a lovely poem came from him dissipated just as fast as it came. He wouldn't have done what he did and said what he said if *this* is how he felt about her. Plus, she was sure that he was definitely not the type of guy who wrote love letters.

So as the green eyed girl raked her brain to figure who it was, she paused. Could it be...

*Steve?*

Jean Grey was excited. Because after she was done with babysitting Erica for the day, she would be dropping her off at Tina's sleepover. And with the following day being the day of her uncle's party, Jean was to be having the first day off in a long while. Hallelujah.

That was until Robin, Steve and Dustin approached them both.

"You want her to do *what*?" Jean incredulously asked, perking a brow at the three. Erica stood by her side, mirroring her bewildered expression.

"Come on, we just wanna see if she can fit in the vent." Robin argued, while Steve and Dustin shuffled on their feet.

"*Why*?" The dark haired girl asked, looking at the nerds with widened eyes like they had lost their mind. "Did staying so close to the freezer for so long affect your brains?"

Jean released a chuckle, seeing their offended faces.

After they begged once more, Erica reluctantly agreed to check the vent, she walked into the backroom and Jean followed suit. Once they'd stepped inside, the door swung closed behind them.

Grabbing a flashlight, the short girl climbed the ladder to inspect the

space all the while Jean, Steve, Dustin and Robin waited for her patiently.

"What is this for again?" Jean curiously asked, crossing her arms in front of her chest.

Steve who stood by her side, pursed his lips before slicking back his hair. "It's a *long* story." He muttered, placing the palm of his hand against his chin.

"Hmm- Yeah, I don't know." Erica hummed, getting off the ladder.

"You don't know if you can fit?" Robin asked.

"Oh, I can fit. I just don't know if I want to."

Jean Grey had an idea on what Erica meant, but the rest just looked confused. The girl was an opportunist, is what she found out.

"Are you claustrophobic?"

Erica snickered, not entertaining the mere thought of her having ridiculous fears. "I don't have phobias."

"Okay, well, what's the problem?" Steve asked.

"The problem is, I still haven't heard what's in this *for* Erica." The ten year old maintained slapping her hand on the metal table.

Nautical tunes played outside as the group sat at one of the customer tables.

Each and every item on the menu was placed in front of Erica Sinclair as an advance on her payment for the upcoming job (which she still didn't fully agree to yet).

"More fudge, please." Erica demanded, sliding over the sundae back to Steve Harrington. He sighed, his brown eyes looking between Dustin and Robin, wondering if these boxes were worth the humiliation.

Erica acted like she was the boss of him, waving her hand for him to

quickly do as told. "Go on."

With a slam of his palm on the table, Steve got up, and Jean was hot on his tail.

Once the two teenagers reached the counter, Steve huffed in frustration. "Fot godsakes, how do you handle that kid?" He asked, adding the fudge on the sundae that 'Princess' Erica asked for.

Jean released a laughter. "I don't. I just roll around, stay still and wait for it to be over." Her words made Harrington's frown to be replaced with an amused look.

Although seemingly calm, the Grey girl still couldn't fathom the strange things they'd just told her. It was a lot to process. Evil Russians caught on tape broadcasting a code. And the shipments they were delivering to possibly plot the country's demise.

Shouldn't they have alerted the authorities? When she'd asked, Dustin said that they needed confirmation before any action was taken, because they might not believe them. But maybe it was also that they wanted the credit to themselves, knowing full well that the government would take over and announce it as their own achievement. Or maybe it was just the summer boredom. She couldn't tell.

"Why didn't you tell me what you were up to?" She asked, stepping closer to the boy.

Steve sighed. "It's Dustin, he insisted to keep it *top secret*."

"But you told Robin?" She asked, raising her brows. From what she heard, the blonde teenager was an indispensable cog in their spy machine; translating the words and singlehandedly cracking the code. But Jean was slightly hurt that when she'd asked them what they were up to, they just lied about it.

Steve's eyes widened from panic. He wanted to tell her, it was Dustin who forbade him not to. "No, no, it's different. She overheard us and pushed her way in. It's not like that, I swear." He babbled.

Jean smiled, pushing away the miniscule feeling of being left out. "It's

okay, I forgive you." She chirped with a playful note that reached her eyes.

Licking his lips, Steve hesitated before sliding over and leaning against the freezer, just a foot away from her. The electricity from her touch was literally calling out to him, begging for the slightest brush his hand against her smaller one, but he didn't move an inch.

Being so close, he noticed the very faint bags under her eyes, and the constant shifting of her feet. She seemed agitated. "Hey, are you okay?" He asked, concerned.

Jean looked up to him, a little surprised that he'd caught her momentary distress as she recalled the recurrent nightmares she'd been having. "Yeah, yeah, I'm fine. I haven't been getting enough sleep lately."

"Well, that sucks. How come?"

She waved a dismissive hand at him, not wanting to get into whatever the hell was going on with her. "Just..nightmares. Nevermind." Jean gave him a shrug and a smile, and so Steve reluctantly let it go.

"So," She started before they could go back to the table ruled by the controlling child. "I'm off tomorrow. Do you wanna go to the fair?" Jean queried, smiling at the brown haired male. She assumed they would be done with whatever this was by the next day and they would be free to attend the fourth of July celebration.

Oh, she had no idea.

"Umm, yeah! I mean that'd be great." Steve exclaimed, trying to hide his enthusiasm, but failed miserably.

He was excited, no doubt about it, but Steve was also terrified on the inside. If he was being honest, the boy didn't know how to act in front of Jean anymore, not after slipping that love letter inside her bag.

Panicked and concerned thoughts were a common occurrence in his head now. *What if she figures out it's me? What if she finds out and*

*doesn't feel the same way?*

If Jean had tapped into his head, she would have had the answer to her question from earlier.

"Just us?" He nervously asked. If it was, then the whole thing would be veering into a date territory.

Jean's eyebrows furrowed at his jittery act. "I mean, yeah, unless you wanna bring Dustin along." She offered, but there was a small part of her that was screaming, hoping that it would be just the two of them.

Steve's eyes grew wide and he shook his head vigorously. "No, he's good, he's got..homework." He lied and Jean gapped in disbelief.

"It's summer."

Steve released a heavy breath, shrugging. "Well, I don't know what to tell ya, their school works them to death." He was surprised at how smoothly his lie went because she just chuckled. "So, do I pick you up at 8?" He asked.

"Great." Jean said, giving him a dazzling smile.

"Great." He repeated, a lovestruck grin morphing his features.

*It's a date*, he thought. And Jean heard him.

Her heart seemed to stop in her chest for a fraction of a second at the intense gaze Steve had on her. "Steve?" She breathed out.

"Yeah?" The boy in the sailor's uniform muttered. The two were leaning against the side of the counter, standing by each other, their faces directed at one another.

Jean felt like her senses were in overdrive as she was highly aware of Steve's body standing beside hers. She gulped with her heart pulsing overtime in its ribcage. "Listen, did you- by any chance-"

The redhead was unable to finish the sentence as Erica's soft pitched voice bellowed from across the place. "Sailor man, where's my fudge?!"

Steve slumped his shoulders, clenching his teeth so tightly that Jean could see the strain of his jaw muscles. "God, I hope the Russians end up kidnapping me."

"The ice cream melted, get me another one."



## 16. CHAPTER 15

### Chapter 15: The Makeshift Elevator

**NIGHT** threatened to embrace the small town of Hawkins once more when Jean and the rest stepped outside the now closed Starcourt mall.

Concentrating, and trying to tune out the troop's constant (and whispered) chatter, Jean placed two fingers against her temple. She closed her eyes shut and went inside the Russian guard's head.

After a moment alone with the redhead, Dustin and Steve suggested that Jean try and read his mind while they were on the lookout, before Erica could begin her voyage.

If they could find out what was in those boxes without entry, that would be a fantastic and completely safe approach.

"Why didn't we think of this before?" Steve asked Dustin, scratching his head. They had Jean, a girl who could literally read minds, how were they so foolish as to miss this point?

Jean, Steve, Dustin and Robin were lined up in that order, left-to-right, lying against the rooftop as they observed the loading dock from the top.

"Think of what?" Robin whispered. The blonde girl was completely in the dark on Jean's abilities so she could only look curiously at them.

Jean snapped her eyes open, huffing in disappointment and at her sheer stupidity. "He thinks *in* russian." She bit out, referring to the language barrier.

"Because of that." Dustin, holding his binoculars in hand turned to Steve, feeling equally as stupid.

Fair eyebrows scrunched, Robin looked at the three. "What are you guys talking about?"

"Nothing." Jean, Steve and Dustin chorused at once, only causing

Robin's curiosity to peek.

Once the armed guard left, the troop waited a moment before contacting the Sinclair girl.

Radio static popped as Robin turned on the walkie talkie. "Erica, do you copy?"

"Mm-hmm. I copy." The ten year old declared, determination fluttering in her tone. "You nerds in position or what?"

"Yeah, we're in position. It's all quiet here, so you've got the green light." Robin stated.

"Be careful." Jean spoke over Robin's voice, fearing for the girl's safety.

"Green light, roger that. Commence Operation *Child Endangerment*."

At Erica's jab, Jean pinched her nasal bridge, her worry spiking. Lucas's younger sister was her responsibility, and if anything happened to her, it would be on Jean. "Can you please not call it that? You're making me feel worse about this whole situation."

Erica snickered. "See you on the other side. Nerds."

With a sigh, the redhead tried to calm her nerves. "If you see anything dangerous just head back, okay?"

"I'm not messing up my chance for eternal free ice cream." The dark haired girl scoffed.

A series of coughs and grunts came from Erica as she crawled through the confined space, as they heard it, Jean and Steve exchanged worried glances. Then they heard the young girl speak, "All right, nerds. I'm there."

"Do you-Do you see anything?"

"Yeah, I see those boring boxes you're so excited about." Erica announced. Satisfied smiles went up Dustin, Steve, and Robin's faces while nervously awaited.

"Any guards?" Robin asked, promoting for Jean to flinch in concern.

"Negative." Was the ten year old's flat out answer. And relief coursed through the group.

"Booby traps?" Asked Robin.

"If I could see them, they'd be pretty *shit* traps, wouldn't they?" Erica retorted, her sassy persona resurfacing.

The blue eyed Scoops Ahoy worker pursed her lips, offended slightly at Erica's sarcasm. It seemed that she finally met her match. "Thank you for that."

"Welcome to my world." Jean mumbled, earning a chuckle from both Steve and Dustin.

A sound of something falling echoed on the radio, and Erica grunted afterwards. "I'm in." She yelled.

A second after, the sound of a klaxon horn wailed from the storage room even up to the roof where they were seated.

A breath of awe escaped from the teenagers' mouths.

Erica Sinclair walked out, strutting as she stopped in front of the opened doors. "Free ice cream *for life*." Erica yelled, placing a hand on her hip.

Descending the staircase of the rooftop in a hurried haste, the group sprinted towards the storage room. Their curiosity fueling the skip in their steps in excitement to find out what the commies were transporting.

Steve, due to his athletic background, was first to arrive, followed closely by Grey. He rushed to open the first box he found-labeled to belong to Imperial Panda- and the rest just watched as it revealed to have silvery metal containers inside.

"That's *definitely* not Chinese food." Steve breathed out, his and everyone's eyes on the peculiar looking object.

Steve sighed, slicking his hair back as he tore his gaze away from the box and looked at the people surrounding him. "Uh, maybe you guys should, you know, stand back."

As told, the three females stepped back without hesitation, while Dustin remained rooted to his spot by his mom. "No."

The brown haired guy narrowed his eyes at Dustin, gesturing for him to move away in fear for his safety. "Just- Just step back, okay?"

"No."

"Step back. Seriously."

The red haired telepath watched the exchange from the sidelines, her mouth slightly parted in merriment at their adorable antics.

"No! No! *If you die, I die.*" Dustin declared, boring his eyes into Steve's.

After what seemed like forever, Steve shrugged and shook his head in surrender. "Okay."

Jean couldn't help the amused smirked that worked on her lips. Now they were friendship goals. "I just wish I had someone who loves me like that." She playfully chirped, earning a snigger from the other two females and a playful glare from Steve and Dustin.

"Don't worry, you already do." Robin retorted, her suggestive words eliciting the tensing posture of the Harrington boy.

"What do you mean-"

"Shuush, I'm going for it." Steve hushed them, in an attempt to avert their conversation from the teasing direction it was heading. He was successful as all of them watched tentatively while he twisted the metal disc. The compressed air hissed as he pulled a cylinder and raised it for inspection.

"What the hell? What is that?" The brown haired nineteen year old asked in wonder, the rest mirroring his expression as they observed the glass cylinder containing something akin to green goo.

Before any one of them could speak or make a move, a slight rumbling occurred, the room shook for a moment like it was trembling.

"Was that just me, or did the room move?" Dustin asked, his eyes roaming the enclosed space.

Eyes darting around in panic, Erica let out a whisper. "Booby traps."

The premonitory mechanical whirling and the unstable environment made Jean and everyone with her nervous.

They needed to get out of there.

"You know what? Let's just grab that and go." The blonde girl declared, prompting a hurried Dustin to frantically press the button needed for their departure. "Which one do I press, Erica?" He queried once realizing the button he was pressing was doing nothing.

"Just press the damn button, nerd."

Jean started to hyperventilate as the air hissing increased, her footing on the floor was becoming even more unstable as the room shook.

"Which one? I'm pressing the button, okay?"

"Press '*open door*'!"

"I'm *pressing* '*open door*'!"

"Just press the other button!" Steve interjected, pressing a flurry of different buttons.

Robin huffed in frustration, giving Dustin a slight shove so Erica could show them what she did to open the door earlier. "Out of the way so she can push the button."

Erica's attempts seemed to prove as futile as Dustin and Steve's. And Jean began walking around the room mumbling to herself that she knew this was a bad idea.

"Just open the door!" Robin yelled, her composure dissipating, panic

all was she was feeling now.

And when matters couldn't get any worse, another door slid down shut with a loud clang, giving all of their fright a boost.

Then they started dropping.

"Oh, shit."

The room that turned out to be an elevator was propelling downwards at such an immense speed, Jean was sure that nothing would cushion their fall once they crashed to the ground.

And so they screamed.

"Shit! Shit! We're going down! We're going down!"

"Yeah, no shit, Harrington!"

"Why don't these buttons work?!"

"Press the button!"

"What do you think I'm doing?!"

"Come on, press something!"

"Just press the button!"

For some reason, the group's out loud yelling was no match to the terrified shrieks that were inside their heads. And Jean heard it all.

*'We're all gonna die!' 'I should've went to Tina's!' 'Shit! Shit! Shit! SHIIIT!' 'AAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHH!'*

"Everyone just calm down!" She yelled, her head begging to develop a headache from their intense broadcasting, they needed to calm their minds.

"How the hell are we supposed to do that?!" Robin rebutted, hands clinging to the wall for dear life.

After what seemed like forever, the fall abruptly stopped and they

crashed onto the floor. The sudden shift in momentum caused all of them to drop on the ground, and they grunted in pain.

"Oh!" Steve gasped in pain as a box fell in the space between his legs.

Jean and Robin winced as they attempted to get on their feet. The former hurried to Erica's side to make sure she was okay.

"My groin. It fell on my groin." The nineteen year old said, his voice strained. "Dustin! Get this off of me! I can't move." And the younger boy did as told.

"Is everyone okay?" Sighing, Robin asked.

"Yeah, I'm great, now that I know that Russians can't design elevators!" Steve aggravatedly exclaimed after getting up to his feet. He shoved Dustin out of the way and headed immediately towards the non-functioning buttons and pressed them desperately.

"I think we've clearly established that those buttons don't work."

"They're buttons. They have to do *something*." Steve retorted to Robin's declaration.

Robin pursed her lips. "Yeah, *if* we had a keycard."

"A what?" Harrington asked, the bewildered look on his face was the same on Jean's.

"It's an electronic lock. Same as the loading dock door. If we don't have a keycard, - it won't operate." Robin stated in a matter of fact.

Jean raised a hand, trying to comprehend what was just said. "You're telling me that we waltzed into the lion's den with *full* knowledge that we might not get out?" She asked, the irritation seeping into her tone.

The blonde was slightly taken aback at Jean's somewhat hostile words. "I didn't think we'd need one on the inside." She muttered.

"Great, that's just great." The redhead bit out, sliding down against the wall and sitting down on the floor.

"The point is-" Robin began, and Dustin finished her sentence. "-we're stuck in here."

"Yeah."

Out of nowhere, Erica spoke after a surprisingly long period of her silence, she usually didn't spend this much time not talking. "Just so you nerds are aware, I'm *supposed* to be spending the night at Tina's, and Tina always covers for me. But if I'm not home for Uncle Jack's party tomorrow and my mom finds out you *four* are responsible, she's gonna hunt you down, one by one, and *slit* your throats."

"Oh, my God, I'm so dead." Jean whimpered, holding her head in her hands.

Steve, now on edge, slammed his hands against the boxes. "I don't *care* about Tina! Or Uncle Jack's party!" He snapped, surprising Jean. "Your mom's not gonna be able to *find* us if we're dead in a Russian elevator!"

Jean hummed, her downcast expression slightly lifting. Maybe if she died here, Mrs. Sinclair wouldn't be able to get to her. "Way to see the silver lining." She said to the taller boy.

Erica Sinclair glared at the two.

Dustin looked up, seeing a small hatchet up on the elevator and an idea popped in his head. "Hey. What if we climbed out?" He suggested, pointing his hand up and everyone followed his line of sight. A gleam of hope shining in their eyes.

All that optimism faded once they found out that they were halfway into the earth's core.

Jean hugged her knees, berating herself for getting into this mess. She was supposed to take care of Erica and keep her safe. And she couldn't even do that.

The Sinclair perked an eyebrow at the depressed girl, watching her for a while made her even more nervous. "Pull yourself together, aren't you supposed to be the adult here?" She asked, plopping by her side on the ground.



Jean breathed in sharply, brushing back her hair with a brisk hand. "I'm so sorry. I should've stopped you from doing this. It's all my fault." She said apologetically, her eyes glossy.

The rest of the group were sitting quietly, hearing the girls talk as they wallowed in self pity.

"Yes," Erica nodded without hesitation. "Yes, it is."

"Jee, thanks for consoling me." Jean managed a soft smile, rolling her eyes.

Erica Sinclair snickered. "I bet you're wishing that mullet hero of yours could come to the rescue again, huh?"

At the ten year old's words, Steve's eyes widened and his head snapped in their direction. "What? What is she talking about?"

"Nothing." Jean lamely denied. It was safe to say that Steve and Billy hated each other, so if he were to find out that she'd been talking to him, much less agreed to go on a date with him, she would never hear the end of it.

"Didn't you have a date lined up with him? I forgot to ask."

*Thank you, Erica.*

The teenage boy's brown eyes widened even further, his shock reaching new levels. "What?!"

Choosing to ignore Steve's incredulous inquiry, a very confused Jean turned to Erica. "Wait wait, how'd you know?" She asked her. The telepath didn't even tell anyone except Max and El, so how did Erica find out.

"You two were putting up your flirty display in front of everyone at the pool. Of course, I know." Erica claimed, eyeing Jean like she was the stupidest person to ever live. "I mean he doesn't look nice and all, but he *did* call my mom for me when you drowned the other day."

"He did?" The statement that left Erica's mouth almost made Jean gasp. She remembered the day when she drowned at the pool, so

disoriented that she completely forgot about the Sinclair, but she was relieved when Billy told her that her mother came. It *was* a bit peculiar that the girl's mother came to pick her up out of nowhere that day. Jean didn't know that Billy was the one responsible.

"Is she talking about Billy?" Steve asked, his bewildered expression unshakable.

Dustin then joined in with an equally stunned look. "Billy? Billy Hargrove? The guy who beat the shit out of Steve last year?!"

"Come again?" Jean asked, raising her eyebrows. The two had a fight? *Was that why Steve disliked him so much?* Her mind bombarded by questions.

"Woah! Woah, hey! He did *not* beat the shit out of me." Steve angrily denied, snapping at Dustin. It was like he trying to ruin his image in front of Jean.

"Um- Yes, he did." Dustin declared, unrelenting.

"We just got into a little fight." Harrington said, still glaring daggers at the fourteen year old. "Wait you went on a date with *Billy Hargrove?*"

His question and tone caught Jean off guard and she let herself think about it seriously. Why did she feel so *terrible* at the thought of Steve finding out? They were friends. Why was to her, him finding out about a date that didn't even take place such a big deal *now*?

"I was supposed to. But...we never got to it."

"*Oh..*" Steve mumbled, his face loosened a little, like a five-year-old who had been told their pet fish had died. His brows sank a little and the slight brightness in his dark eyes faded.

In Jean's mind, she found that Steve Harrington was warm and sincere, fun and reliable. As she looked at his dejected expression, the redhead couldn't help but wonder why she felt this confused feeling in her heart.

Steve and Jean wormed their way into each other's lives in only a

couple of months, and she held him dear in her heart. But once she found the love letter in her bag and began speculating it was him who wrote it, Jean began to think of Steve in another sense.

And as she thought about Billy, she found that it was different. He was captivating. Him asking her out gave her butterflies at the time. She grew to like him after a while from their first meeting, since she thought she had finally understood him. Of course, *now* she had no idea what Billy was thinking -even her telepathy proved to be useless for some reason- and she wondered why he even bothered with her from the beginning. It was a mystery to her.

Steve nervously shifted on the cold floor.

Finding out who he considered to be his biggest enemy get the heads on him by asking out the girl of his affections, and seeing that she actually *agreed* to it, he was absolutely heartbroken. But seeing the distressed look on Jean's face at the moment, he forced down the bile that wanted to surface and pretended like he hadn't heard what transpired minutes ago.

If his act of pretense didn't sit well with the girl, she showed no signs of calling his bluff. Though, it was obvious that she still felt extremely uncomfortable. He didn't know that if she could feel that he was, too, but it was fortunate that their moment of silence was broken by Erica Sinclair.

"I'm hungry."

## 17. CHAPTER 16

### Chapter 16: An Expansion of Potential

DUSTIN'S breathing picked up, his eyes squeezed shut as he grew tired of his own repetitive words. "Code red, I repeat, code red. Does anyone copy? This is a code red, I repeat, a code red. This is a code red, I repeat, a code red." His frustration became more evident with every word he muttered, the boy desperate to be heard and rescued.

"Does anyone copy? We are innocent children and we are trapped under Starcourt Mall. The Red Army has infiltrated Hawkins, and if we are found, they will torture and kill us."

"Hey." Steve grunted as he climbed out of the elevator vent and joined Dustin up on its surface. "Gotta take it easy on that thing. Gonna drain the battery." He indicated, slicking his hair backwards. The stuffy and poorly-ventilated elevator proved to be too much for him, sweat gathering on his forehead.

"The mall just opened." Dustin declared. Since his wristwatch indicated that it was morning time, maybe someone could catch their signal and rescue them before they get caught by the russians.

"So?" Steve asked.

"So, someone could be in range."

"What do you think, Petey the Mall Cop is gonna rappel down here and save the day?" Steve questioned, mockery entangling in his tone. His sour mood still persisted from the revelation of last night; the possibility of Jean (the girl he liked) and Billy (his nemesis) becoming a thing. And he found sarcasm to be the best outlet to the ache in his heart that he couldn't soothe.

"All right, why are you such a cranky pants after getting to spend the night with *Jean*?" Dustin asked, whispering the redhead's name, but in the quiet environment, his voice still proved to be too loud. And Steve panicked at the thought of her hearing them. "*Shh!* Jesus Christ. Will you just keep your voice down?"

"I heard you guys talking all night." Dustin chirped in a teasing manner, smiling suggestively.

At the beginning, Dustin didn't think that the two were a good match—granted, his judgment might have been impaired by the crush he harbored for Jean. But as time went by, he changed his mind as he saw how genuinely happy the two were at each other's presence. They wouldn't stop joking around, laughing and having fun.

Dustin never saw Steve act that way around Nancy back when they were together. I mean, sure, Harrington was head over heels in love with Nancy prior to when their relationship went up in flames. But every time Dustin would come over to Mike's place for the occasional DD campaigns, heading down to the basement, he would take a momentary glance to the living room to see Steve and Nancy. The two made a gorgeous couple, sure. And Steve's eyes shone with affection like no other for the eldest of the Wheeler children. But as the two sat down on the couch, watching whatever chickflick she chose, arms wrapped around each other, something would look wrong. They were...*stiff*. Like something was missing. Like they weren't as comfortable as they should be in each other's presence.

Unlike with him and Jean.

Steve scoffed at Dustin's presumptive thinking. "Yeah, Robin was up, *too*. We were trying to figure out a way to open up the door while you children were sleeping." He said, standing by the edge of the elevator surface and beginning to unzip his pants.

"After *eight hours*, we're still exactly nowhere, which is, you know, probably just a little bit of the reason why I'm feeling just a tad cranky." He said, choosing to omit the real reason why he was so upset.

Seeing a liquid splashing against the wall and the dripping sound from above, Robin scoffed in disgust once she figured out what Steve was doing. "Can you redirect your *stream*, please?" She loudly demanded, her voice echoing.

"Yeah, *Dustin*, you heard her!" Steve lamely yelled at Dustin, pretending to be innocent of the action.

"Wait, that's *you* peeing. Why are you dumping the blame on me?" Dustin argued, earning a shush from Steve. The brown haired boy desperately wanted to preserve his image in front of Jean.

"Ugh." Robin shook her head, while Jean released a giggle.

Catching the sight of Erica holding the dangerous looking vial, and recklessly beginning to tap at its glass, Jean went full babysitter-mode. "Hey, hey! Be careful with that!"

"Yeah. We don't even know what that is." Robin warned, equally as concerned.

"Exactly. It could be useful." Erica retorted, shrugging her shoulders.

"Useful *how*? Robin asked, eyebrows raised.

"We can survive down here a long time without food, but if the human body doesn't get water, it will die." The ten year old exclaimed in a matter of fact.

"You were planning on *drinking* that?"

Erica turned aggressively to Jean who coiled back slightly at Erica's somewhat hostile temperament. "I'm sorry, would you rather explain to my mom why I'm dead from dehydration?"

Jean exhaled sharply. Erica was her responsibility, no doubt about it. But she tried to stop her and warned her that it'd be a bad idea to go up that vent. But Erica chose not to listen and chased after the free ice cream. "Hey, I warned you! You're the one who got greedy and kept saying you wanted the ice cream."

"Whatever." Erica mumbled, rolling her eyes. Then Robin snatched the green goo container and took it out of Erica's reach. "Well, I hate to break it to you, but this is not *water*."

Erica snorted, smiling obnoxiously at the two older girls. "No, but it's a liquid, and if it comes down to me drinking that shit or dying of thirst, I drink."

A distant electronic whirling sound echoed from beyond the closed

gate of the elevator, eliciting the brief eye contact between Jean and Robin. The two girls strided towards the doors and pressed their ears against them, their eyes widening at the realization.

"We've got company."

The troop quickly climbed up the hatchet and hid from the upcoming people. They remained quiet as a beeping sound blared from down them and the door opened with a thud.

Jean could hear the indistinct male voice chattering in russian, her heart beating faster. While Steve looked over to Erica Sinclair who was hugging the green glass cylinder for some reason. And an idea popped in his head.

Once the men drove away, a grunting Steve jumped down quickly as he reached the gate before it closed.

Jean's chest heaved as she trailed Steve, using the shelf again to step down, before helping Erica and Dustin as fast as she could. Steve had gripped the chemical container from Erica's fingers and whipped it underneath the door. He placed the sturdy metal object underneath it and the door stopped, only leaving a small space ajar. The problem was that they didn't have enough time, they only had mere seconds before they were locked in once again.

"Let's go. Go." He instructed, pushing Dustin through the small opening. Jean kneeled beside him and assisted Erica through as the door began to crush the cylinder.

"Go, go, go, go, go!"

"I'm going!" Erica yelled sliding out. Then she was followed in a haste by Robin.

Jean went next and as she rolled on the floor, she saw the vial buckling under the pressure. The door was creaking above her as she slid herself on the floor. "Come on, Steve!" The redhead said, her face looking worried as Steve barely made it.

Caught between the metal door and the cold ground, Steve found himself staring at the vial with wide eyes, watching the glass crack

more as less than a second passed. Time was thinning and he felt the door closing in on his spine.

The gate was almost set to close shut with him underneath it, but he was dragged out. Grasping his shoulders, Jean who was still on the floor pulled him out and the two rolled across the linoleum floor. The moment he escaped, the cylinder split, and shards of the glass surrounded the pool of the corrosive fluid. But he and Jean didn't notice at first.

Once his eyes fluttered open they met with Jean's which were only a few inches away from his. His heart was still pounding in his chest from the earlier possibility of being crushed beneath the heavy door, but it almost skipped a beat once he'd realized the position they were in; he was on top of her, basically straddling her and his body was pressed up against hers, each of his arms supported by her side.

Jean gulped and she could feel the heat rushing to her cheeks at the brown haired boy's proximity. And he had a blush to match, his eyes wide. The two were broken out of their daze by the sound of Robin clearing her throat.

"*Ahem.*"

A slightly flustered Steve tugged Jean up as the green chemical bubbled, searing the floor and creating gaseous smoke in the air. She swallowed hard as did the rest.

The material proved to be acidic in nature as it sizzled its way through the floor, disintegrating it.

"Jesus Christ." Steve bellowed.

The five of them let out gasps at the deadly substance.

"You still wanna drink that?" Robin smugly asked Erica, raising her brows at her.

"Holy mother of god." Dustin muttered, his words making the rest turn away from the floor to the corridor.

The never ending corridor that stretched for miles.



Steve sighed. "I hope you guys are in good shape." He said before walking ahead of the group, Dustin, Erica and Robin behind him.

"Okay, so we're walking *towards* the danger?" Jean dejectedly mumbled to herself before following them.

"You think they built this whole mall so they could transport that green poison?" Steve asked as he and the rest of the group walked and walked for what seemed like forever.

"I very seriously doubt it's something as boring as poison. It's gotta be much more valuable, like promethium or something."

Jean scrunched up her face in confusion at Dustin's words, and when she looked at Steve, she found that he held a similar expression. "What the hell is promethium?" He asked.

"It's what Victor Stone's dad used to make Cyborg's bionic and cybernetic components." Robin smugly stated, earning a satisfied grin from Dustin, a fellow nerd.

Jean seemed to recognize the blonde's words, recalling the Cyborg comics she'd read with Max. "Like from the comics?" Apparently Max was a hard core fan of DC and Wonder Woman and not the Marvel comics. They 'sucked' in her opinion so she never talked to her about them and Jean didn't know anything about them.

Erica cringed, holding her stomach to show how nauseated she'd become at the flow of the conversation. "You're all so nerdy, it makes me physically ill."

Steve vigorously disagreed with the accusation, shaking his head. He denied it like not being a nerd was the only thing that left him standing. "No, no, no. No, don't lump me in with them. I'm not a nerd, all right?"

"Why so sensitive, Harrington? Afraid of losing cool points to a ten year old child?" Robin snickered, eliciting a smile from Jean.

"No, I'm just saying I don't know jack shit about Prometheus."

Dustin intercepted Steve and quickly corrected him. "*Promethium*."

Prometheus is a Greek mythological figure, but whatever. All I'm saying is, it's probably being used to make something."

"Maybe they're making another gigantic hole in the ground." Jean suggested, referring to how that green liquid easily disintegrated the cement.

Robin shook her head. "Doubt it. Maybe to power something."

"Like a nuclear weapon?"

"Totally."

Steve pursed his lips at Robin and Dustin's words. "Walking towards a nuclear weapon. That's great." He mumbled.

Jean gave a frustrated sigh, thinking it'd be idiotic to proceed. "Aaand we're still walking."

"But if they're building something, why here? I mean, *Hawkins*. Seriously. Of all places. At the very best, we're a toilet stop on your way to Disneyland, but maybe that's it. Maybe it's our very.." Robin babbled, and Jean tuned her out at the end once she realized that Steve and Dustin halted in their step, and started mumbling and exchanging words quietly. The blonde noticed as well and abruptly turned.

"I'm sorry, is there something you'd like to share with the class? You guys have been whispering into each other's ears for a while now." She complained, referring to the earlier occasion where the two and Jean continuously spoke privately without including her. Jean felt guilty for excluding Robin earlier, but she couldn't so openly speak of her powers. Hopper warned her.

The mother and child exchanged nervous glances, but before they could give an answer, a sound of static hissing blared from the walkie talkie in Erica's bag.

All of them gathered around as Erica took out the walkie and listened tentatively as a man spoke in russian over the radio.

"It's the code." Robin declared.

"Wherever that broadcast is coming from-" Dustin began and Robin finished his words, nodding. "It's close."

"And if there's one thing we know about that signal."

"It can reach the surface."

A gleam of hope shone in Jean's green eyes, relief draping over her. "Okay, so there's still a chance you can make it to your uncle's thing." She said to Erica, earning deadpan glances from the rest.

Steve pinched up his face at the redhead, although he did find it kind of adorable seeing that frantic side of her. She was always so serene and calm so it was a contrast to her usual demeanor. "Priorities, Jean." He indicated, giving her a slight shake of his head.

"Hey, I just don't want to survive down here only to be killed in the suburbs by Erica's mom because she missed the party." She argued, promoting another shake of head but this time it was Robin's.

"Let's go."

As they proceeded in hopes of reaching the radio room, Jean could only hope that they wouldn't run into any Russians on the way.

The red haired Grey could only curse at their misfortune. The more they proceeded forwards, the more she could sense the presence of various minds nearby. But what did she expect? For an entire military base to be empty?

An engine sound of the red transport truck began fading by the second as it drove away in the opposite direction of where they were hiding.

All of the bunch crept out, sighing at how close they were to being caught.

Steve, the unannounced leader of the group, walked ahead of them followed by Jean. They both cautiously looked around. "Clear, come on, let's go."

Robin's breathing was still unsteady from the scare of the rookies

sudden appearance. The only thing that gave them a heads up was Jean who out of nowhere whispered for them to hide because she 'sensed' people which the blonde still couldn't comprehend. Albeit, she was grateful to the redhead. "Okay, that was close."

"Too close." Dustin agreed, panicking internally. Although the fourteen year old was grateful for Jean's assist, a part of him wished El was here instead. No offense to the beautiful older girl, but Eleven was more resourceful and her powers had better use for them in this current situation. Or so he thought.

"Relax. Nobody saw." Steve said to Robin and Dustin. Just when he was about to take a turn to the left, Jean abruptly grasped his upper arm and clawed at it to get him to stop walking. "Ow!" He shrieked in a somewhat feminine manner. Steve widened his eyes and quickly cleared his throat, trying to lower his voice. "I mean, ow. What was that for?"

Robin shook her head at his antics, while Jean seemed preoccupied with something else.

"There's a lot of people down there." She announced.

Dustin and Steve exchanged glances before the latter peeked his head to check and see. She was right, there was a buttload of Russians, ones in uniforms and others in hazmat suits.

"Shit." Steve said under his breath, straightening up and hiding against the wall like the rest.

Curiosity ate at the rest of them so they copied Steve's actions and once they saw, they mirrored his expression.

"Jesus."

"How in the hell did you know?" Robin asked Jean, perplexity drawn on her face.

"Instinct?" Jean replied.

"I saw it. First floor, northwest." Erica exclaimed, and all eyes turned to her.

"Saw what?"

The Sinclair girl rolled her eyes. "The *comms* room."

"You *saw* the comms room?" Steve incredulously repeated, trying to check and see but turned right around because how easily he could be spotted.

"Positive. The door was open for a second, and I saw a bunch of lights and machines and shit in there." Erica declared.

"That could be a *hundred* different things." Dustin said, pinching his nasal bridge.

Robin looked up to Steve and the girl slightly shorter than him, before determinedly speaking. "I'll take those odds."

Eyes darting between the two girls, Steve sighed. "All right. We're gonna move fast, we're gonna stay low. Okay?"

"Okay."

Jean closed her eyes, hoping to god they don't get caught.

The bunch heard indistinct chatter around them as they sneaked their way across the large place. "Shh! Move it."

They treaded lightly and stopped by a large metal square pinned to the ground. They didn't even know what it was, but fortunately it was big enough for them to hide behind it.

Only a few steps till they reach the comms room. Their eyes became hopeful.

The troops faces fell, their worry and panic spiked as a soldier went in their way, but his head was turned in the direction opposite of them. A simple tilt of his head, and they'd be done for.

"Oh, no." Robin mumbled in less than a whisper, her eyes turning glossy at the thought of dying just like that.

The soldier with the massive machine gun seemed to be patrolling

the area, his footsteps echoing grimly as he walked in front of them. His line of sight still not meeting with them.

Jean cooled her mind. She thought calculatingly, observing the soldier. "Don't move." She commanded. And from their state of panic, it seemed they were unable to, their bodies tense and frozen.

The redhead could see the four of them turning to her, eyeing her like she was crazy.

"Just trust me, stay still." She breathed in and moved her fingers on her temple. Closing her eyes, she entered the soldier's mind.

Jean was taking a leap of faith as she delved into the man's head. She'd read about the presumed capabilities of a telepath and their possible ability to change what others perceive. Maybe she could make him see what she wanted to and not make him see what she didn't.

She just needed to tap into the right corner of his mind. After a relatively short search, the telepath felt euphoria creeping into her as she found the brain's area responsible for the configuration of what he sees.

And so, she manipulated it, warping his perception.

Once the man in uniform turned to them, all of their breathing hitched. All of them were about to cry, no exception -save for Jean who remained focused to make them seem invisible.

*And it worked.*

The large russian man just stared right at them with his stoic face, his eyes blank and disinterested as it looked straight at them. His grip on the weapon in hand remained calm. It was as if he was seeing through them.

And after a good minute -that lasted an eternity for the group- he walked away like nothing had happened and went on with his patrol.

Steve, Robin, Dustin and Erica all held shocked facies. Their lungs eventually giving out after their halted breathing and then they

started hyperventilating.

"What in the holy hell just happened?" Robin seemed the first to snap out of her daze, but stared at them with equally widening eyes.

A breath of relief escaped from Jean's lips and she smiled to herself. She was a natural at this, it seemed. It appeared to be like she had a ton of possibilities to unlock regarding her abilities. And she was not wrong.

"Yeah, why didn't he see us?" The stunned Erica Sinclair asked.

Steve was still frozen, rooted to the spot, still not comprehending what just happened. A light bulb switched in his head and he quickly turned to Jean and his suspicion was confirmed once he saw the satisfied look on her face.

"Was that-?" He lowly whispered to the girl crouched beside him, implying that she was the one who just saved their ass. Jean tilted her head to the brown haired boy and smiled at him, giving him a quick nod. Steve reciprocated the expression.

Seeing that the group was still stuck in their questioning state, Steve cleared his throat drawing their attention to him. "He probably has shit eyesight." He suggested. Dustin scrunched up his face at him, about to interject but was stopped by Steve's narrowed eyes. Dustin's face flashed with recognition once Steve gestured his head towards Jean.

Dustin rubbed his forehead, trying to rationalize the unexplainable situation. "Yeah, I think he had a glass eye."

Erica and Robin gave the three confused looks. "What? That doesn't make any sense."

Fortunately, the door to the comms room beeped open, grabbing all of their unbridled attention. They turned to it and saw a man in a labcoat leaving. So Steve sprinted in a rushed haste to hold the door before it was shut. The rest followed him in a hurry.

"Come on." Steve whispered, holding the door for them and sighed in relief once they all safely entered.

They were so preoccupied with the door that didn't notice the Russian soldier sitting across from them.

Jean gasped and coiled back once the man shot up from his chair upon seeing them. It was too late for her to make a move or try to get in his head when he reached for the gun in his holster.

In fact, they were all frozen except for Robin who came forward and started speaking in Russian. The words were so familiar to the redhead, perhaps it was the code itself, she thought.

Although the man's fingers shied away from the gun for a second at Robin's words, he was still alert. And he spoke in response in Russian, his face still painted with confusion.

The terrified troop saw how Robin glanced back at them, probably at her wits' end as she muttered her last word in a way of a tentative statement.

The man scoffed and brought his hand to pull out the gun, and Steve, out of instinct ran to him. The Scoops Ahoy employee let out a battle cry as he sprinted to the soldier and attempted to grapple the larger man.

Jean winced when the Russian threw Steve against a table and groaned. But a victorious smile soon took over her face when she saw Steve elbow him in the guts then smack his head with a large phone. The momentum of the impact caused the man to slam his head against the desk and lose consciousness, falling to the floor.

Steve victoriously stood over the unconscious soldier's body.

The red-haired telepath bit her lip. There was something oddly attractive with how Steve panted after winning the fight, his arm lifting so he could run back his hair with a brisk hand.

"Dude!" Dustin's loud voice tore Jean from her bizarre thoughts that she recognized were not..appropriate in the given situation.

"You did it! You won a fight!" The fourteen-year-old yelled. His exclamation made Steve proudly look between them and the unconscious Russian, and he chuckled softly.



As Dustin rushed to take the Keycard from him, Jean approached Steve with her cheeks notched upwards from her big smile. "That was...impressive."

"Y-you think so?" He stuttered, partially because he was still out of breath and the other part because he was flustered from her compliment.

"Knocking out a trained military personnel? I'd say that's pretty awesome."

Steve almost blushed as he looked at her with his own matching smile. "Thanks. Well, it's not as awesome as what you did back there. How'd you pull that off by the way?" He asked, his mind traveling back to its original state of curiosity and confusion from earlier's event.

Jean's grin grew wider. "I made us invisible."

"You-you could do that?" Steve dumbly stammered looking down to his hands to inspect them.

"Not *physically* invisible. I just convinced his mind that we weren't there." She reasoned with a soft rumble of laughter vibrating through her chest.

"Now that's badass."

Before Steve could ask any further, Robin came up to them, looking more panicked than ever.

"Guys! There's something up there."

**A/N:-Eeeeeey!So finally, Jean is beginning to learn the full extent of her telepathy! It's so cool when she and Professor X use their powers to seem invisible and make people fall asleep in the movies XDMeanwhile, her telekinesis is jelly of being repressed for so longPlease tell me what you think so far and what you would like to see happen!**

## 18. CHAPTER 17

### Chapter 17: Mutant And Caught

**WORRIED** glances were exchanged between Jean and Steve at Robin's panicked exclamation regarding the presence of something upstairs.

The two of them, Erica and Dustin began following the blonde up the metal stairs that echoed with loud clang sounds as their feet heavily stepped upon ascension.

Once they'd reached the top, the five stopped in front of the large door that had two glass windows. Jean, Steve and Dustin peeked at one, while Erica and Robin looked through the other.

Jean and the rest could only gasp what were in front of them. Scientists seated in an observatory room, and outside of it there was men in hazmat suits walking up to a giant machine, *it* was what caught their attention.

"Holy shit." Steve mumbled at the sight.

A low frequency pulsing noise boomed from the machine as well as a loud electric crackling. A beam was shooting out from the device, directed ahead at a crack in the wall.

Jean suddenly winced as she focused on the glowing slit in the wall. A headache suddenly hit her, dizziness, as well. *Something* was on the other side, she realized.

"Ah." Jean's breathing picked up as she rubbed her temple, the loud thrumming was right against her eardrum. A shriek came out from the other side of the wall. Images invading her mind. She didn't *know* how she knew, but she realized what that thing was.

*It was an entry. A doorway between worlds.*

"It's a gate." Jean announced, her wobbly feet taking a step back from the door. At her declaration, Steve and Dustin snapped their heads at her in shock, while the other two girls scrunched their faces at her.

"How'd you know? Did El tell you?" Dustin asked, eyebrows raised. He's never seen the Gate to the Upside Down before, but he had a rough idea of how it looked like. This was definitely it.

"Tell me what?" Jean said, equally as confused. She wasn't comprehending what this was or how it came to be. And so, the redhead quickly went down the stairs followed by the rest.

Robin jumped the last few steps, her face painted with a shocked perplexity. "I don't understand. You've *seen* this before?"

"Not exactly." Dustin mumbled.

"Then *what*, exactly?"

"All you need to know is it's bad." Steve claimed, eliciting an agreeing nod from Dustin.

"It's really bad. Like, end-of-the-human-race-as-we-know-it kind of bad."

Jean ran her hand through her head and began pacing across the room, her head was so bombarded with thoughts that she failed to notice that a certain someone was missing from the floor.

"And you know about this *how*?"

"Um, Steve? Where's your Russian friend?" Erica's inquiry made everyone pause, their eyes traveling to the now empty space on the tiled floor.

"Uh oh."

When matters couldn't get worse, an alarm blared throughout the room, and a red light started flashing.

Harrington immediately sprinted to the door and just as quickly closed it once he'd seen the soldiers coming their way. "Shit!"

Jean released a whimper before they all started running.

"Go, go, go, go, go!" Steve demanded as the group of five dashed in a

rush.

"Shit." Dustin muttered once the door flew open and they stood in the observatory room. The lab coat wearing scientists turned to them, surprised at their presence.

"Move! Let's move!"

Jean could only pant as she scampered behind Dustin and Steve. They rushed outside, charging against the russians by the large screeching machine.

"Holy shit! Holy shit! Holy shit! Holy shit! Holy shit! Shit! Holy shit! Holy shit!" Dustin screeched as they stood by the edge, seemingly they had no where to go.

"Guards!"

"Go! This way!"

They went down the stairs on the sideline and quickly made their way down a dark corridor, their feet were barely carrying them as they were being chased by the armed men.

"Oh, shit! Oh, shit!"

The only thing that seemed to come out of the group members' mouths was either 'shit' or 'let's go' as they made their way to a closed room.

Steve grunted as he closed the door behind and slammed his body against it to prevent the men chasing them from entering.

"Come on! Go, go, go, go, go!" Jean gestured for Dustin and Erica to head towards the small door leading underground. She rushed to the struggling Steve once she realized his legs were giving out against the external pressure applied on the door.

Steve and Jean were starting to fail to maintain their grip on the door, especially with how weak Jean had felt ever since laying eyes on that 'Gate'. Steve released a grunt as they waited for the kids to open the vent and leave. "Help me, come on!" He yelled to the blonde

who was frantically trying to help them escape.

Seeing that Erica was becoming hesitant to leave, her babysitter widened her eyes. "Erica, go now!" And the ten year old complied in a rush.

"Go! Just get out of here!" Steve bellowed at an also reluctant Dustin.

"No!"

"Just go get some help, okay?!"

"Go!" The doomed three yelled at Dustin who still didn't seem to relent.

The guards yelled in their mother tongue, banging against the door, and Jean's whole body shook as she tried to push all her weight against the door.

"I won't forget you!" Dustin yelled with glossy eyes. His fear was that this could possibly be the last time he'd see them.

"GO!"

And so, the fourteen year old departed, going underground and closing the hatchet behind him.

A sigh of relief escaped from the three, and at that moment of relaxation, their guard was down. The Russians pushed the door open and it's momentum made Steve, Jean and Robin slide across the floor.

The redhead and the blonde yelped in surprise while Steve grunted from the pain. Their eyes snapped open in fear when about five soldiers threatened them not to move in russian.

Jean just watched them. She was frozen, face stricken and hands clenched by her sides. Her breaths were shallow. She could feel her eyebrows quivering between neutral and and furrowed, and lips trembling.

Guns cocked in the three's every direction, the men were still yelling at them in the foreign language.

Jean's nails dug into her palms as she stared at the scene and she could feel blood bead beneath the assault.

It was all so sudden.

Two of the russians dropped their guns -much to their comrades surprise- and grasped their heads. The telepathic girl scrunched her face in disdain as she induced pain in their minds.

She honest to god didn't know *how* she was doing it, but she projected from her mind bolts composed of psychic energy, that enabled her to stun the mind of the two men into unconsciousness.

The remaining soldiers could only watch in panic as their comrades collapsed to the ground. They yelled indistinct russian words at each other.

Steve glanced to Robin and then to Jean who held a grim look on her face. At that moment he *knew* it was her responsible.

With one last jagged breath, Jean shut her eyes before she descended into darkness.

Doctor Zharkov had seen a great deal in his life. Working for the Russian army had granted him access to things most wouldn't be able to fathom.

And while he'd seen so much, a doorway between worlds even, he hadn't seen anything like the unconscious red haired girl lying on the examination bed of his laboratory.

The doctor hadn't bared witness to the feat that the soldiers had claimed she accomplished. With just an intense glare, two of their best warriors collapsed. They'd barely awoken after hours of intense care, and once they did, they blamed *her*. Saying she was in their heads, inflicting pain upon them

He, and a select few of Russian officals heard whispers of *special* children. Children born with extraordinary gifts that the US government was experimenting on. But that was all that it was. Rumors. There haven't been any evidence of any of those kids, no matter how much their government searched for them or any like

them.

He was reluctant to believe what they claimed at first, but as Zharkov ran his tests on her, he became painfully aware of how wrong he was.

Now, the Officer -the one responsible for the intruders- had entered his office, standing statically as he awaited for the diagnostics on the comatose girl.

**"Vital signs, good. Brain activity's normal. The genetic reading..."** He started, looking through his papers. His eyes still not believing the spike in her DNA. **"While the phenotype appears to be normal, she possesses a unique genetic trait... A mutation."**

The military man remained stoic, but a glint of curiosity flashed in his eyes. **"Enhanced in a laboratory?"**

Zharkov shook his head, the fingers grasping the papers slightly trembling. He's never seen anything like this before and it both amazed and terrified him. This was out of his area of expertise. **"I don't think so. It's encoded into all of her genetic material. Too advanced to be artificial."**

**"She has so much potential. I've never seen a power reading like this, she's literally off the charts."** The doctor declared.

**"So, what does that mean?"** The Officer questioned, nudging the physician to haste to the point.

Zharkov could only release an evil chuckle. The possibilities were endless when it came to this kind of mutation. **"This could be the next stage in human evolution. It could help us win the war."**

The officer smirked. **"Do you think you could replicate it?"**

**"I'm not quite sure just yet, but if I could-"**"The tables would turn significantly."

Giving a brief nod, the Russian official turned to leave and acquire further information from the other two prisoners. **"Take as many samples of her blood as you can."** He indicated, his eyes traveling to Jean. **"It must be delivered to our home office overnight."**

Steve Harrington and Robin Buckley hated themselves so much at this very moment. They cursed their curiosity that got them into this mess in the first place.

Once Steve had woken up from the beating-induced coma, his ears started ringing. Every breath he took caused an immense stabbing pain to surge in his chest, he probably had a broken rib or two. And his left eye was throbbing and felt like it could fall from the socket at any moment.

And to make matters worse, Steve had more things to worry about than the Robin did. The reopening gate to the Upside Down being one of them, and of course, Jean Grey's safety was the first. The telepathic girl just suddenly went out cold after presumably doing something to those guards. And despite his protests and screams, they took her to a different cell than his or Robin's.

Now he could only imagine what they were doing to her.

He, nor Robin had barely time to talk as a buzzer sound echoed through the quiet room before a door swung open.

At the threshold to the torture chamber, the Officer who administered Steve's beatings stood. "Pardon the delay, our physician is preoccupied with your red haired friend." He announced with a thick russian accent, strutting towards the pair tied against the chairs.

At the mention of her, Steve's body jolted upwards, the confines surrounding him prevented any move he intended to make. "Jean?! What did you do to her?!"

"Don't worry, we are taking excellent care of her," The Officer smirked, enjoying the rattled look on the boy's face. "*for now*. As long as you answer my questions regarding her."

Steve visibly tensed, fearing that they'd figured out her.. *abilities*. While Robin just scrunched her eyebrows.

"She's your countries weapon, no?" The man asked, going in circles around the two to assert his dominance.

"What?! No!" Steve out flat denied, like it was the most ridiculous



thing in the world.

"We have no idea what you're talking about!" Robin yelled the truth. She was completely in the dark to what happened back there.

"Then I suppose she didn't stun my men with her mind?" The Russian sarcastically asked, standing over the blonde.

"We don't know anything. Those two guards just collapsed on their own. Right, Steve?" Robin quickly said, tilting her head to look over the boy tied against her back.

"Y-Yeah." The stammering Steve berated himself for his bad lying skills. And the military man caught it.

"How *embarrassing*, your meal plans must really suck!" She said, looking up at the man and releasing a smug chuckle. Apparently, she thought it was low blood sugar that got the two soldiers.

Then, the door swung open, revealing a couple of other guards who spoke to their commander in Russian before entering.

They were dragging Jean inside.

"Jean?" Again, the brown haired teen struggled against the binds that dug into his skin, his legs trying (and failing) to aid him in jumping forward towards the girl he liked.

Seeing her unmoving, pale form, Steve's face twisted to pure disdain to the men carrying her. "Jean! What did you do to her, you bastards?!" He growled. His anger was spiking once he saw them throwing the unconscious Jean in a chair opposite him; her sleeves pulled high up to reveal the multiple needle stab wounds on her forearm.

The man released a sadistic breathy chuckle as he observed Steve's reaction. "Just a few tests. I see you're quite fond of her. Hopefully that means you will cooperate this time." The Officer said, a sickly sweet smile on his face as he approached Steve who was glaring daggers at him.

"Let us out of here, we told you we don't know anything!" Robin

whimpered, again trying to explain that they had nothing to do with the injured soldiers.

"Let's try this again. *What* is she?"

The first interrogation session had been fruitless for the Russians. And so, the guards had left them for about half an hour, but promised to return with their doctor to 'patch' them up.

Steve's head was hazy from all the beatings. So naturally, he wasn't surprised when he started seeing things. Things like the medical plates and equipments splayed across the metal table shaking and trembling.

"Steve..What's happening?"

Said male gave a breath of relief that he wasn't the only one seeing this, he was glad that it wasn't the trauma affecting his head. "Oh, shit. Is it an earthquake or something?" He asked in slight panic. They were so far underground, so if an earthquake would occur, they'd be totally screwed, he thought.

"That's only affecting the table's surface?" Robin asked, mocking sarcasm dripping from her tone. Nothing else was moving, only the objects on the table were dancing in a vibrating motion.

"I think we already established that russians can't build stuff for shit." He clarified, referring to the makeshift, deadly elevator and the possibility that it was a faulty table.

"Do you think...maybe it's her?" Robin hypothesized, her eyes traveling to the unconscious Jean.

Steve had told the Buckley girl *everything* there was to know about Jean Grey after the Russians left them. It seemed only fair, since they were all in this together. Robin was reluctant to believe him at first, but as he explained every bit of her ability one-by-one, she pieced everything together. And it made perfect sense. Of course, she still had a shit ton of questions that she wanted to ask the redhead.

Steve pinched up his face, his head tilting towards Robin who was pinned to his back, and he was unable to meet with her face. Jean

wasn't able to move things with her mind, she only read people's thoughts and went in their heads, he thought. "What? No, I told you she's a telopath."

"You mean, telepath." Robin corrected, fair eyebrows scrunched.

"That's what I said."

"No, you said *telopath*."

As the two argued, they didn't pay attention that the trembling of the medical equipment had ceased.

"Same thing."

"You know what? It's not the same thing."

The two bickered in a loud volume, and although Jean's chair was right up against theirs, their voices weren't even as low as a whisper in the unconscious redhead's mind, Jean's very confused and jumbled up mind.

She only heard and saw the glimpses of what she only presumed were her own memory.

## 19. CHAPTER 18

### Chapter 18: Coming Out With Self Doubt

*JEAN navigated throughout the disoriented area. She didn't know where she was as she aimlessly walked around in the misty place. Fog in the color of imperial red manifested in front of her.*

*As the telepathic girl stepped in what seemed to be a neverending corridor, Jean came to a realization when she saw the imagery flashing before her like a giant cinema screen. Jean let out a breath of amazement. She was inside her own head. The redhead didn't care to rationalize how she was doing this, and immediately decided to discover the depths of her subconscious. Maybe it was after furthering her grip on her telepathy that she was finally able to understand herself and find out who she was. Passing by her most recent memories, Jean could only sigh once she'd realized where she possibly was. A captive in a Russian secret base.. But her disappointment over the present didn't stop her from continuing her path down memory lane. A wide grin came up to her as she walked and surpassed her earliest memory; the memory of first laying eyes on Eleven in the woods. One more step, and she'd finally find what she was looking for. "No, no, no, no!" Jean's eyes turned glossy when she'd hit a wall. A literal wall that was invisible to the naked eye, it was more like a force field. Something was keeping her out. She didn't know that she was keeping herself out. Jean's lower lip quivered, her eyebrows scrunched in frustration as hot tears descended down her pale cheeks. "Please, please, let me see." She softly tapped against the see through wall with the palm of her hand, her voice trembling. "I wanna see!" As time passed, Jean's crying grew more intense and her anger overtook her grief. Her light tapping against the force field morphed into raging bangs, her fingers clenching onto fists as she slammed them against it. "Let me in! LET ME IN! LET ME-" Before the eighteen year old could howl even further, she was sucked into the opposite side of wall. Jean gasped, her breathing picked up in surprise at what was happening; misty images manifested itself before her, and each one of them dragged her into it almost forcefully. **"You wanna come in? Come all the way in."** A man whom she couldn't place, but looked really familiar, was standing in front of her, up close.*

***"Don't forget what you did."** He bit out. His face was stern but grief was*

flashing in his eyes.

Jean could see another scene flash by her, this time it was a child. A young girl. Her hair was as red as hers and her eyes were the same shade of green. She was sitting in a moving car. **"Quiet!"** The little girl yelled, covering her ears and closing her eyes shut. Then the whole vehicle she was in flew in the air out of nowhere. Once Jean blinked, she was brought back to the original place where the older man stood in front of her. **"I'm sorry, Jean. But my whole world died that day. And... you went with it."** He admitted, his voice trembling. Jean could feel the tears of rejection gathering in her eyes and clouding her vision, she tried to hold them back but was unable to. Trying to blink them away but once she did, she was dragged into another portion of her memories.

**"Whose blood is that?"** A man with an accent queried, narrowing his eyes at her. Jean looked around the dark room where shadows played in its interior. The man grimly approached, clenching his jaw, tossing her an accusatory look. **"On your shirt. Whose blood is it?"** Hesitantly, Jean followed his line of sight and looked down to see she was wearing a wrinkled grey shirt, its center was stained with a big splash of red. Bloody red.

Was that really someone's blood? Jean began to hyperventilate at the thought of hurting someone. She wouldn't do that. Would she? **"When I lose control... things happen, bad things. To people I love. And it scares me because-"** This was what she could hear, but the words seemed to come out from a sobbing version of herself. Bile rising in her throat as she muttered those last words. **"-it feels good."** And then Jean was pushed away, out of that part of her head. The redhead collapsed to her knees, terrified breaths escaping from her chest, her heart pulsing overtime. The things she'd just witnessed left her body in a cold sweat and confused as to how horrific the imagery had been. She cried, they were too realistic for them to be nightmares. They were memories, her memories. She wanted out. Jean didn't want to be all alone in the maze that was her own mind. She was scared of herself. "Jean?" Like an angel's tune, said girl heard a soft pitched voice utter her name. The redhead looked up from her misery wallowing and her face immediately lit up upon seeing the face of someone she always loved seeing. Jumping to her feet, Jean ran to the girl who seemed to be always rescuing her. But she wasn't sure if she was really there, a part of a memory or just a figment of her

imagination. "Eleven? Are you really here?" Jean breathed out, her gentle hands rose with subtlety to cup El's cheeks. "Yes." El declared, smiling softly at the gesture. Eleven sure as hell needed that warmth after the hell she and the party went through. The brown haired girl was at Hopper's cabin with Mike and the rest. Still trying to find the played, but it seemed like they've vanished off the face of the earth. So, while she was cooped up in her room trying to find them, and the people outside still arguing about what to do next, El decided to deviate slightly. It's been two days since she'd seen her sister figure and it was safe to say that she was far more worried about Jean's safety than about finding Billy and the rest of the played. She just had to check up on her. So when the fourteen year old entered the Void to find Jean, she was instantly dragged to a place she didn't recognize. And she found that redheads's face drenched with tears. "Are..we inside your head? What..is this place?" El softly asked, her brown eyes scanning the area.

Jean was evidently too preoccupied with gazing at her saving grace to realize where she'd been. She wasn't returned to that godawful long hazy corridor filled with misty memories. Instead, they were in a hallway, one that must've belonged to a large house. Jean made her way to the wooden wall and placed her hand against it. The entire hallway radiated such a warm aura as she looked around, her heart soothed by it. The place was all too familiar. "I don't know. I keep having these memories. I see flashes. I think I had a life here." Jean hesitantly announced, eliciting the confused look on El's face. "Are you okay? Why can't I find you?" Jean gasped at El's question, her mind going back to the original (and physical) predicament at hand. She, Steve and Robin were all probably prisoners waiting on execution. "Oh, my god! The Russians, they-they took us." "Russians?" Eleven repeated, her head tilting to the side, dark eyebrows furrowed in perplexity. "Go to Hopper! Tell him to call the police or-or the military. Tell them to come get us from under the mall." Jean frantically said, hoping to god that they could be rescued in the nick of time. El shook her head. "You're not making sense." "Eleven, please!" Jean begged for her dear friend to focus, seeing that she was losing her attention. Eleven walked away from her, her footsteps echoed in the hallway as she stopped in front of a window high up on the wall. Eleven's curiosity was spiking as she saw something different outside. Instead of reflecting a greenery sight like the other windows, this particular one showed an entirely different sight. "What is that?" El asked, making Jean follow her to see what it was. Outside the window there was..what looked like a cloud. A firey

*crimson cloud that swayed in waves outdoor. It was destroying every thing in its path."Nothing good." Jean breathed out, shaking her head, she sensed that the object was coming for her. It was the same one from her nightmares.This force wanted her, Jean could feel it. It craved her to the point where it didn't care what it wrecked in its way to reach her.*

*"Get out of here."*

*"What?"Jean grasped El's shoulder and telepathically pushed her out of her head. "Get out! NOW!"Eleven's scared face as she flew out of the corridor was all Jean could see before the walls crumbled and the glass windows shattered, the force attacking.The crimson cloud surrounded the red haired telepath in a field that didn't contain air nor even gravity. It made her float around, controlling her every movement just before it rushed to enter her.Jean screamed; she could feel her veins burning as the fire consumed and possessed every inch of her being, marking it as its own.In this moment of agony, she cried and cried. Jean wished for it all to stop and to just go away.And so, it did.*

Jean Grey's eyelids snapped open, her head lashing backwards. Eyes blinded for a second by the bright lights fixated against her face. Once they adjusted, her green irises roamed as she tried to break free and get out of the chair she was bound to.

The redhead panicked, skimming the place around her, but a breath of relief was released from Jean once she saw Steve and Robin lying on the floor. "Guys? Where are we?" She asked, looking at them. They were chair-tied like herself, only their backs were to each other.

Hearing the girl's soft voice put both the Scoops employees at ease.

"Jean? Oh good you're up." Robin said with a breathy chuckle. "Do you think maybe you could lift us up and cut off our binds?" She asked, her tone gleaming with hope.

Puzzled at the blonde request, Jean narrowed her eyes, looking down at her own shackled form. "How? I'm as tied up as you guys are, if not more."

"You know.. Do it with your mind?" She drawled, her face turning grim in hesitation. She had hoped that Steve was wrong and that she

could not only read minds, but also move things with hers.

"My what?"

"It's okay, Steve told me everything."

Steve shook his head.

"Well, I can't move things with my mind, I'm just telepathic." Jean clarified.

"Told ya." He chirped smugly at Robin. He tried to lift his head from the cold floor to try and see Jean's face, he'd honestly missed her. But he was unable to because his back was to her. He was jealous of Robin for being able to see her while he was stuck gazing at the wall. "Are you okay?"

Jean smiled at his concerned question and was quick to reply. "Yeah, I'm just a little lightheaded that's all."

"I gotta say, it was so awesome when you knocked out those two back there." Robin gushed, glad that Jean was finally awake so she'd be able to express her excitement. It felt surreal to meet someone with actual superpowers, let alone be friends with them.

"It really was." Steve agreed with a smile.

Everything came crashing down on Jean once they spoke of the earlier incident. "Right.."

Steve sensed the melancholy Jean's tone emitted, this wasn't the response he was expecting to their compliments. "What's wrong?" He asked, his dark eyebrows perking.

"That thing I did back there.." Jean gulped, recalling what she's seen in her head. The things she'd possibly done before losing her memories. Violence she must've committed was hinted to her by those flickers. Perhaps hurting those guards was just the beginning to her descent into losing control of a dark power she didn't know she possessed.

"It surged out of me like a tidal wave, and it almost killed them. I



almost killed them." Hot tears were pooling in her pale eyes, and she desperately wanted to wipe them but was unable to due to her confines.

Robin snorted, unaware of Jean's distress. "To be honest, it would've been totally fine if you had."

Steve rolled his eyes at his coworker. "Robin,"

"Yeah?"

"You're not helping." He seriously indicated. The boy could sense Jean's pain, and it hurt *him*, too.

"Okay, I'll shut up." Robin mumbled, pursing her lips.

"Jean, it's okay." He affectionately soothed, surprising the blonde by his side.

The redhead shook her head, feeling the tears of frustration going down her face. "No, it's not. I shouldn't be able to do that."

*What if she couldn't control herself from then on? What if she starts hurting people she loved because of it?*

"But you can." Steve said, and Jean could practically hear the smile in the softness of his voice. "And despite what you're thinking, the fact won't change that you did it to save us."

Steve heard the shaky breath coming out of Jean's lips and he wished that he could see her face, look her in the eye and tell her it was all going to be okay. He hated the Russians assholes for binding him, and he also hated his own weakness at this very moment for not being able to break free of them. "Once we get outta here, we'll control it. So it's less tidal wave, more... ripple. Okay?"

Robin saw the downcast look on Jean's face dissipating as it was quickly changed by a tiny smile. Steve was smoother than she gave him credit for, Robin thought.

Jean thickly swallowed her doubts, and chose to believe in Steve's words just like he seemed to believe in her. "Okay."

Steve smiled to himself, trying to imagine the look on her face; probably her translucent green eyes glistening with tears, but the gentle tone of her voice indicated a rise of her lips into a small grin.

The blonde female was dead silent, listening to the two. She wondered if it was alright to hide herself when they were so *open* about themselves in front of her.

"If there's any consolation, I know what it's like to have a part of yourself that you can't change. To have to hide it from everyone else." She told Jean with a shaky voice.

The two of them readily accepted each other with all their flaws, maybe, just maybe they could accept her, too. Robin hoped.

Both Jean and Steve held similarly confused expressions at her declaration. "What do you mean?"

Taking a deep breath, Robin braced herself for a moment that could possibly change her friendship with the two.

"I'm..gay."

The brown haired guy and crimson haired girl went silent for a second, but it felt like an eternity to Robin who was already on edge to hear their reply.

A non-surprised Jean appreciated the fear and stress involved in unveiling something this big. Choosing to come out meant that she trusted them and wanted to share a significant portion of her life.

"Thanks for telling us. I know it may not have been easy to come out, and I really appreciate you trusting us enough to share this." Her voice was calm and steady, thoughts about her own predicament long gone as she focused on the nervous blonde.

Cocking her head to the side, Robin held an astonished look. Sure, she was relieved at her open-mindedness, but it felt off that she so readily accepted it. "That's it?"

Jean nodded. "I mean..I kinda already knew?" She shamefully admitted.

"What, how?" Robin frantically asked, not necessarily offended, but shocked. She thought she'd hidden that part of herself pretty well. *Did she give out a vibe?*

"Telepath, remember?" When Jean didn't hear a reply, she was quick to explain. "I'm sorry. I know it's a huge invasion of privacy, but I sometimes just slip into it without meaning to."

It was especially hard for her to remain outside of people's psych when she'd just met them. Her ability having more of an instinctual approach to kickstart around strangers, and then she puts her foot down and asserts her distance away from their minds.

She licked her lips awaiting for a response from the other girl.

"No, no. It's fine. It just wasn't the reaction I was expecting." Robin said, chuckling in disbelief. She was panicking a little on the inside, to think that she could've been exposed on every thought that ran through her head was a tad terrifying.

"What were you expecting?" Jean queried, an amused smile rising on her lips.

Robin's smile stretched, but Jean could see the strain in it. The latter tried to gesture with her head to the grimly quiet Steve whose face neither of them could see. "Something like his." She said, her voice breaking a bit from nerves.

Jean tilted her head to the side.

"Steve, did you pass out over there?" Robin asked.

Clearing his throat, the boy was quick to reply. "No, no, I'm awake." He could sense from their eerie silence that they were waiting for his response.

Robin was anxious, but Jean knew wholeheartedly that Steve wouldn't say anything that would make her feel bad about her sexuality.

She knew what kind of guy he was, Steve was kindhearted and comforting. Even though he might have once called her a 'freak' the

first time they met, he apologized and Jean had never encountered that side of him ever again. And afterwards she found him to be one of the most accepting people she could ever meet. Jean wasn't even sure that he could ever be mean to anyone.

A guy who always managed to put her heart at ease.

Steve sighed. "That's cool and all, but didn't you *just* say you had a massive crush on me back in high school?" His curious question seemed to make both girls gap at him.

"What?!"

"She said that?"

"No, I *didn't*!" Robin was quick to deny the accusation.

Steve furrowed his brows. Just now before Jean woke up, Robin admitted to always focusing on him in their history class. To the point where she even knew his breakfast routine. He was flattered, sure. But his heart belonged to someone else right now.

"Well, I might be paraphrasing but I'm pretty *sure* you admitted to stalking me in history class." He said, a playful note fluttering in his tongue.

"Wow, you are definitely *way* off base." Robin humorously replied, knowing that he was jesting to lighten the mood.

Jean smiled, but she was yet to know the entire story. "I feel like I missed out on a lot by passing out." She mumbled, prompting Steve's smile to widen.

"Trust me, you didn't." Robin replied to the redhead, then directed her next words to Steve. "And you, I was only obsessed with you because I was *jealous*.. She just wouldn't stop staring at you." Robin said, her perky voice dying out at the end.

"Mrs. Click?" Steve asked, confused.

"The history teacher, I presume?" Jean asked, raising a wondrous brow.

Robin sighed as she remembered the object of her unrequited affection. "Tammy Thompson." She corrected, frowning.

Steve pinched up his face, scanning his memory for someone with that name in their class. Then, recognition blinked in his eyes. It was the girl who couldn't hold a tune even if her life depended on it. "The lousy singer?"

"Hey!" Robin snapped, offended for her crush. But before any more words could be said, the door buzzed open. "We'll discuss that later." She muttered to the guy stuck on her back.

Jean's head quickly turned to see an old man in uniform. His stoic face turned slightly amused upon seeing Robin and Steve on the floor.

"Where were you two going?" He asked in his thick accent, clicking his tongue and shaking his head. His eyes gleamed with evil mischief once they'd landed on Jean. "You're awake. Good." The officer said, intimidatingly walking up to her. Jean's face scrunched in disdain for the evil man. "We gathered that being with your comrades will make you a bit more talkative."

Jean averted her gaze from the Russian and instead looked at Steve who the other men lifted off the ground and repositioned in front of her. Her eyes widened at the sight of blood and bruises covering every inch of the skin of his face.

She winced, her heart aching at the sight. Once he'd met her gaze, he smiled softly. "They really beat the shit out of you, didn't they?" She joked.

Steve shrugged, a smile still drawn on his lips. "Oh, this? You should see the other guy."

The Officer rolled his eyes at the two, but smirked once he saw their skilled doctor walk in with his equipments. "Try telling the truth this time, yes? It will make your visit with Dr. Zharkov less painful."

Jean, Steve, and Robin widened their eyes at the sight of the gun-needle a man in all white was holding.

The brown haired teen felt his insides drop once he approached him. "Wait a second. Wait. Hold on. Okay! Wait, wait, wait! What is that thing?" He panicked, meeting Jean's frightened face.

"It will help you talk."

"Did you even clean that thing?!" Steve screeched.

Without needing his complaints, the sadist if a physician injected the drug into Steve's neck and enjoyed as the boy screamed at the excruciating pain.

"Stop that!" The redhead demanded, but no one looked at her. The military men seemed to be enjoying each and every moment of Steve's agony.

Jean exhaled sharply before closing her eyes, she wouldn't just sit by when the people she cared for were hurting. So she immediately went into as many russian minds there were in the room, and started to induce a painful ringing in their heads.

The doctor dropped the needle and held his head in agony as he and all of them screamed. Seeing the response, Steve and Robin chuckled victoriously, but their faces immediately fell when one of the men ran to Jean and smacked her in the face.

The redhead winced, the impact making her dizzy. She yelped at the pain that literally shook her brain and made her lose concentration.

"SEDATE HER!" The Officer demanded, and Doctor Zharkov complied in a flurry.

Jean felt a needle piercing into the skin of her neck, ripping her flesh as she wailed.

Her vision became blurry before she once more succumbed to the soft darkness that crept in.

## 20. CHAPTER 19

### Chapter 19: Escape And Confession

**EVERYTHING** was hazy in the eyes of the sedated Jean Grey. The room wobbled, voices and words weren't comprehended in her messy head. Everything moved in a blur.

Even the alarms that boomed everywhere weren't enough to snap her out of her daze.

"Hey! Henderson! That's crazy, I was just talking about you." Steve's voice was distorted as it reached her ears.

"Oh, my God!" Dustin and Erica paused after they entered the interrogation room and electrocuted the doctor. They were still out of breath after the stunt they pulled with the green acid to gain the russians' attention.

Seeing his friends chair bound, Dustin rushed to cut them out. "Get ready to run." He cautioned to the dumbly grinning Steve while Erica desperately shook Jean.

"Jean! Wake up!" The ten year old begged, beginning to gently slap the redhead a multitude of times to snap her out her state. All of her attempts proved futile and she sighed.

"This is not how this is supposed to work. You take care of me, remember?" Grabbing Jean's arm and raising her to her feet, Erica supported most of the older girl's weight on her and it proved to be too much. "Dustin, help me!"

To their luck, the four -and the sedated Jean- had no encounter with any of the bad men as ther rushed to the cargo-transporting car.

Steve and Robin wobbled their way into the back, giggling as they did while Dustin and Erica dumped Jean in with them.

"Jesus, slow down!" Steve slurred. The fourteen year old seemed to be driving like there was no tomorrow so they wouldn't get caught. The speed at which they were going was affecting the three in the back,

with Jean who was seated suddenly falling over on her back.

"Yeah, what is this, like, the Indy 500?"

"It's the Indy 300."

"No, dingus, it's 500!"

"It's 300!"

"Let's say a million."

Tweedledumb and Tweedledee laughed loudly, their amusement coming from a source unbeknownst to Dustin and Erica who were in the driver's and passenger seats respectively.

"What is *wrong* with them?" Erica moaned, distressed by the state of the three older people.

Dustin had a firm grip on the wheel, relieved to find that they were almost there to the elevator. "I don't know." He frustratedly shook his head.

Meanwhile in the back, Robin giddily chuckled before looking at Jean whose eyes were closed. "Oh, my god, she's so pretty while she's sleeping." She drawled, reaching out to touch the redhead's cheek, but her perception was so impaired that her hand touched the floor instead.

"*Totally*." Steve agreed, his eyes widened.

"You should totally kiss her so she'd, like, wake up." Robin suggested to Steve, giggling after she did.

Harrington gasped and pulled up both of his hands to cup his own cheeks. With the burning fever that was induced from the drug that was shot up in his system, he looked like a blushing maiden. "Nooo, you think so?"

"Nobody's kissing anybody back there!" Dustin growled. The young boy was losing his patience at the two's antics. Their drugged state seemed to be making them lose all inhibitions.



"Party popper!" Robin retorted, and it prompted a chuckle from Steve. A grunt soon was released from his mouth once the vehicle abruptly stopped and collided with something.

The sudden change in pace made Jean's body shift just as hard and her head was hit by the metal partition of the car.

Jean groaned, the impact seemingly making her gradually come back. "Ow!" She moaned, lifting a lazy hand to touch her dizzy head.

"Oh, good, you're up." Erica mumbled after opening the door and she dragged Jean out.

The redhead stood on shaky feet, her head barely supported upwards as she flickered her eyes open. Erica grabbed her hand and pulled her in the direction of the elevator.

"Here goes nothin'." Henderson declared before swiping the key card into the electronic lock.

Hiding in a movie theater may not have been the best idea Dustin had come up with, but it was the best option considering their current situation. With Tweedledumb and Tweedledee out of control, and Jean being sedated out of her mind to the point where she could barely walk on her own, a dark room where they all sat to pass the storm seemed like the perfect idea.

As he left to try and contact the party in order to obtain a ride home, the on edge Dustin left Erica in charge. Unfortunately, the little girl was so preoccupied with the movie that she didn't pay attention when the drugged duo decided to leave.

Jean's consciousness was slowly regained throughout the movie, its loud volume and soundtrack boomed into her ears and snapped her out of the drowsiness the drug had induced upon her.

She tilted her head from side to side to properly take in her surroundings, and Jean found that she was seated in the back next to strangers. Her eyes darted to the front and saw the familiar outfit Erica Sinclair had been wearing for the past 24 hours, and she sighed in relief.

Jean's eyelids were still heavy, and she was scared that she might go under once again, especially with how dark the room was. So she got up to her feet and headed outside the theater to wash her face.

On her way to the bathroom, the redhead supported herself against the padded walls as she walked on her somewhat unsteady feet.

Steve Harrington was in one of the bathroom stalls, crouching over the toilet. He painfully emptied the contents of his stomach, vomiting stuff he didn't even know he ate. With each bout of emesis, he whimpered and cursed that beautiful rooftop that got him dizzy in the first place.

And if things couldn't any worse, some asshole was knocking on the one stall that wasn't empty.

"OCCUPIED!" Steve growled, lashing out all of his misery on the person on the other side of the door.

"Steve?" Jean asked with a soft pitch.

She'd walked into the bathroom and splashed some water on her face and it admittedly refreshed her. But hearing the vomiting sound echoing out in the bathroom, she knocked in concern to see if the person was doing alright.

Steve's eyes went wide, recognizing that soft voice anywhere, immediately shifting his demeanor to a much more gentle one. "Jean? What are you doing here?" He lifted his head out the toilet and stared at the closed door of the stall, sure that she was on the other side.

Jean dropped her hand from the door, crossing her arms in front of her chest. "Well, this *is* the ladies bathroom." She replied, a smirk on her lips.

Eyes widening even further, Steve realized that he'd been in such a rush to get to the bathroom that he'd accidentally walked into the wrong one. "Oh." He chuckled before feeling another bout coming his way, the bile going further up his throat and he couldn't hold it back any longer. So he went for it.

Jean's face once again morphed into a concerned look at the sounds,

her arm dropping by her side. "Hey, are you okay?"

"Yeah totally." Steve lied through clenched teeth, hoping to god that the vomiting noises didn't put her off.

Jean could practically hear the gagging sounds and she winced at his struggle. "Really? Because I just passed by Robin in the hallway and she was vomiting her guts out in the trash can."

"Oh, yeah that." He breathed out, finding difficulty to speak. He hugged the toilet, hoping she'd just go away and not hear any more of this. He'd never let himself live this down.

Unfortunately, the opposite of his wish came true. And he heard the door creaking open. "No, no, no! Don't come in." He frantically yelled, giving Jean a scare and making her halt in her action, coiling back.

"You sure? Don't you want me to go in there and hold your hair back for you?" She playfully joked, but her words stemming from the desire to help him through this, just like he aided her earlier with her moment of weakness and fright from her own powers.

Steve laughed at her jest, but later regretted it because the rumble in his chest caused him to go at it and throw up again.

Eventually Jean relented on the thought of entering, but she refused to go away. She slid down and sat on the hopefully clean floor to wait this out with him. Although embarrassed at first, Steve appreciated the kind gesture.

A few minutes passed, and the red haired girl heard nothing blaring from the stall Steve was in, indicating that he was done.

"Are you feeling better now?" She queried with hopeful eyes.

Steve sighed and moved away from the toilet, he looked up at the ceiling and found that it was no longer spinning. In fact, he felt like himself again. "Yeah, I think I flushed it out of my system." He declared, much to Jean's relief.

"Good."

Steve looked to the tiled floor, smiling to himself, relishing in the fact that this was their first time alone in a long while. "Ask me something just to make sure."

Jean found his request to be odd for a moment, then she grinned widely, finding this to be an opportunity to ask him something that's been occupying a significant space of her curiosity. "Okay, why do you use the Farah Fawcett hairspray?" She asked with a chuckle. The very first time they'd met, she had read his thoughts and found out about his hair care routine. She never asked him before and now she wanted to know.

Steve ran a hand over his face, wishing he'd never asked her to guarantee his soberness. "No!"

"Yes!"

He sighed, smacking his lips afterwards. "It gives my hair volume, alright?"

Jean raised her eyebrows. "I better try it out then."

Steve shook his head. "You don't need it, trust me. You have beautiful hair." He affectionately complimented. *You have beautiful everything, Jean.* Steve thought and he wouldn't have minded if she'd read his mind at this moment -she didn't- because it was the absolute truth.

Jean could feel the heat creeping up her neck and settling on her cheeks, she was sure they were as red as her hair from how sincere Steve was. She would never get this sort of reaction if someone else had complimented her, maybe not even Billy.

She was becoming more sure that he was the one who'd written her that letter. Even after the hell she had gone through in the Russian base, Jean was still adamant on finding out who'd felt so strongly for her.

"My turn." Steve declared, prompting the red haired girl to furrow her eyebrows. "Go for it."

With a deep sigh, Steve gathered his courage to ask the one thing he knew couldn't handle the answer to if it wasn't what he wanted it to

be.

"Do you..like Billy?"

Jean's eyes flew open and became as wide as saucers. "What? No." She shook her head, but in truth, she didn't know how she felt towards the blonde lifeguard. "I mean, he's just..an unexpected guy. He can be nice one minute, and a complete asshole the next."

"Then why do you associate with him from the beginning?" Steve asked, frowning.

Jean shrugged. "He's been through a lot. I thought I understood him, but I guess I was wrong.." She trailed off, her teeth clenching at the end. Fortunately, her answer didn't elicit a response from Steve.

"Ask me another question." He indicated, snapping her from her thoughts. He wanted to change the topic, and he was also stalling just so she wouldn't suggest they go back to the theater and interrupt their long-awaited alone time.

Smiling, she thought of a relevant question that she could ask him.

"Who was your first love?" Jean didn't know where she was going with that question. It wasn't like he was going to reveal that he wrote that love letter to her or anything at the inquiry. But she wanted to know if he would hint at having such feelings for her like it said in the card. Everything would've been so much easier if she'd just read his mind and found out for sure, but it just didn't seem right to Jean. If it had been him, then he didn't want her to know for a reason.

Steve cringed, remembering his first love and first heartache. "Nancy Wheeler. First semester, senior year."

Jean became surprised and somewhat confused. "Nancy Wheeler? As in Mike's older sister, Nancy Wheeler?"

"Yup." He confirmed, popping his lips at the 'P'.

She remembered the awkward atmosphere that arose when she stood in their presence at the party they've been invited to a couple of months ago. "I knew something was up between you two. What

happened?"

Steve sighed, slicking back his hair. "She left me for someone. She was actually the first girl I ever fell for and.. she broke my heart."

With a hand raised to place over her heart, Jean couldn't help but sympathize with the brown haired sweetheart. "I'm sorry." She softly said, and it prompted a scoff from Steve, which surprised her greatly.

"Don't be."

"Why?"

Steve pursed his lips, becoming anxious once he contemplated telling her how he really felt. "It's..because I moved on and fell for someone else."

Jean swallowed down the bitterness that rose in her throat. Could she be jealous of whoever he was talking to? Jean shook her head, and forced a smile even though the door was still closed and they couldn't see each other's face. "Really?"

"Yeah. It's someone that I didn't even go to school with, which is I'm thankful for because I wouldn't have appreciated what a genuinely good person she is back then." Steve stated, holding back a snort on how much of an asshole he was. If Jean had went to school with them, he was sure that she wouldn't have liked the person that he used to be.

For all the heartbreak Nancy had put him through, he was thankful to her. If it weren't what he'd gone through, he wouldn't have had this much personal growth. And if he hadn't broken through his popular guy facade, he wouldn't have met and fell for Jean.

Jean brought her thumb and placed it between her lips, lightly nibbling on her fingernail as she listened to him. Was he talking about her?

"And despite the fact that I was a total jerk to her and insulted her the first time we met, she still managed to get passed that. I mean she got me through shit I wouldn't have been able to on my own. She's honestly unlike anyone I've ever met before."

Yes, he was definitely talking about her, unless he had a habit of making bad first impressions on everyone.

Steve gave a breathy chuckle scratching at his head. He thought that he was finally seeing things more clearly than he ever did in his entire life with her by his side.

He felt immense relief putting his feelings out there. Dustin was right. He kept telling him to go get his Suzie. He urged him on to go for it, to tell her how he felt. Either that or move on with someone like Robin.

"It's weird, for about the last year, I felt like there was something missing from my life, and I didn't even realize what it was until she came along."

Jean took a deep breath, now sure that he was talking about her and that he was her 'secret admirer'. It was Steve. Her closest friend. She grinned like a mad woman, brushing back her red hair with a brisk hand.

The redhead was flustered, the revelation bombarding her with so many questions that she didn't think was humanly possible. Steve was handsome, funny, adorably goofy, kindhearted, and apparently a kickass when it came to beating up russians. She couldn't deny the attraction she'd felt towards him, and the warmth she sensed in his presence. But is it love? Was this the first time she felt this way? Why did it feel like it wasn't?

***'When I lose control, bad things happen to the people I love.'***

Jean's smile fell, and froze as the sentence echoed in her head, these words were spoken by her, another her. One that was so broken that she regretted ever caring for people in the first place.

At first, the sailor uniform-clad teenager was glad that a door was separating them because he was able to speak more freely without hesitation or feeling embarrassed. But now, he grew anxious when he couldn't see her reaction. And he was even more worried now that she wasn't replying. "Jean? You okay out there?"

*Did he just ruin their friendship?* Steve wondered in panic.

Jean had been so distracted with her dark thoughts that she practically flinched when Steve knocked on the inside of the stall door.

"Yeah, I'm good." She replied with a shaky voice. It made Steve's anxiety spike and he bit his lip, an action he immediately regretted because of how busted his lips were.

Unable to wait to find out about her answer to his feelings, Steve jumped up to his feet and swung the door open to see the seated Jean. He took a few steps forward before plopping down in front of her.

He saw her uncrossing and crossing her legs, probably shifting from a previously uncomfortable posture.

Jean gulped, forcing her thoughts away from her head once she gazed at his face, his bruise covered face. "God, your face looks even more messed up in this lighting." Jean chuckled, but internally feeling bad to see him this beat up, she didn't know it was an annual event for him.

Steve snickered. "Thanks, you look great, too."

The two looked down for a moment, awkwardly averting their gaze from each other. Jean licked her lips, feeling obligated to give him an answer.

"So what do you think?" Steve was the first to break the silence.

Jean looked up at him, feigning curiosity. "About what?"

"The guy."

Jean gave him a soft smile. "I think he's the one who's responsible for a certain love letter."

Steve reciprocated her expression, chuckling at the end. "Uh, oh. He's so busted."



Swallowing thickly, the red haired telepath decided to cut the bullshit. To tell him right away what she thought of him and *herself*. "Look, this guy.. He doesn't even know this girl - heck, she doesn't even know herself." Jean said, seeing how Steve curiously glanced at her.

Her eyes turned glossy from the thickening tear film. "And I'm scared that if he got to know her -like the *real* her- he wouldn't want anything to do with her."

Steve furrowed his dark brows at her, he didn't understand what she was talking about, but he knew for a fact that she was wrong. "Jean, that's *not* gonna happen."

Jean recalled the memories that were apparently blocked from her, and for good reason. She's only seen a tiny piece of it, and it was bad enough.

*A bloody shirt. Accusatory glances sent her way. The tidal wave of regret and guilt that she knew wandered in the back of her head.*

She couldn't deny any of it.

"I've done things, Steve. *Bad* things."

Steve gave her an incredulous shake of his head, assuming that she was talking about the Russian soldiers she hurt. "If it's about what happened down there, I told you that it doesn't matter. They would've done worse things to you if they got the chance."

*It wasn't just that.*

"You don't understand, Steve." Jean's lower lip trembled, her finger nails digging sharply into the palm of her hands.

"Well, then tell me." Steve wanted to understand, to know what was distressing her so badly. He wanted to help her just like she helped him back when he felt like nothing could cheer him up, when he felt nothing but rejection. She was his ray of sunshine at the his darkest times, and he wanted to be the same.

"Sometimes..I get flashes." Jean paused, and Steve could see how pale

her face had become. "Glimpses of the person I used to be."

If he was being honest, Steve would constantly forget that Jean had amnesia. She never spoke of any memory recollections, nor did she display any distress about not being able to remember. She seemed to be enjoying herself, like she was free from the shackles of her mysterious past. He didn't know she was struggling in secret. "Why haven't you told me this before?"

"*Because..*" She took a sharp breath to prevent herself from forming any more tears or else they'd spill from her eyes. "Because I thought that by talking about it, it would seem more real. And if I don't then I pretend that they're just nightmares."

She was in denial, a hypocrite. She'd convinced herself that she wanted to remember who she was and what her past was like, but in truth, she was blocking any memory that tried to resurface. Jean didn't want to recall the possible horrid things that she may have committed, so she'd shrug them off as nightmares or just simply force them away in the darkest corner of her mind.

Even right now, she didn't want to talk about it because of the possibility that they could come flooding back. She didn't *want* to trigger something that her own mind was protecting her from.

"Hey, it's okay." He cooed, unconsciously reaching out and holding her hand, and assuring her that she didn't have to get into it right now. Steve didn't want her digging up something that clearly caused her so much pain.

"There's something wrong with me, Steve. And it scares me so much." She said with so much pain that he could feel it. So he gave a comforting squeeze to her hand that he still held. "Hey, there's *nothing* wrong with you."

"I'm different." She uttered those words in a manner that screamed: why do you even bother with me?

Steve dedicated a bright smile in her way. "That's precisely why I like you." She was almost blinded by his sincerity and Jean was quick to clarify her point. "*Not* in a good way."

"No way is that true, Jean. You're funny, you're smart, you have awesome powers." He rambled, his grin turning wider if that was even possible. "You're beautiful, Jean. Inside and out. And no matter what happens, you're still you. That's what I will *always* see."

*If only she saw what he sees in her*, he thought.

Jean Grey felt flustered with the heavy look of Steve Harrington on her. He seemed to be truly fascinated by her, as if she was the most splendid piece of art ever made.

And so, her green eyes drowned in the intensity of his dark ones.

"You're a really great guy, Steve." Said Jean, a soft smile gracing her eyes and cheeks. She couldn't help but cheer up with the pleasant aura he radiated.

Steve shook his head at the compliment, about to shrug it off but Jean wasn't having it, continuing to speak. "I mean it. You're *perfect*."

He swallowed nervously, feeling trapped in the eyes of the girl sitting in front of him. Steve had never been called perfect anything in his life -save for his hair- and so he wasn't used to it, especially when it came from a girl he bared such strong feelings for.

Even when he was the *King of Hawkins High*, he still struggled with his own insecurities. Yes, he had the hair, popularity and the nicest car. But he wasn't the smartest kid in school or the most talented. Perhaps that was why he surrounded himself with people like Tommy or Carol and sought their approval. And why he so easily (and falsely) thought that someone as good as Nancy would readily cheat on him when they first started dating.

So naturally, Steve felt his heart fluttering faster than a hummingbird flapping its wings at how genuinely she'd said it. She truly *believed* it.

*Maybe he did have a chance after all.*

Her following confession would confirm his hopeful assumption.

"And I like you, Steve. Not just in a '*you're my friend*' sort of way. I *really* like you."

Steve was over the moon with her words. The girl who he liked reciprocated his feelings. His eyes shone in pure bliss and he felt like the luckiest guy in the world at this very moment.

Jean could see him wrapping his arm tighter around his knees, it was like he was fighting every instinct in him not to jump forward and kiss her. And she was right. He was waiting for her to finish talking.

"I just...I'm sorry but I need some time to think." His nice and supportive words didn't change the fact that she was dangerous. Her growing feelings for him, if anything made her even more adamant on guaranteeing that she was safe to be around. She didn't want to break his heart, but she didn't want to break him even more.

"Oh." Steve dejectedly mumbled, his eyes widening at first.

The redhead saw how his ecstatic face was quickly replaced by a downcast look. And it tugged at her heartstrings as she stared at him and awaited for his actual reply.

Steve licked his lips then quickly pursed them, a reluctant nod of his head soon followed. "I understand."

He wasn't about to force an answer out of her right now. She deserved the time to contemplate on what she wanted to do, especially with the hell she's been and still is going through. She was hesitant about everything; her own existence, her powers. And so he didn't want her to feel like she had to make a decision right away. She liked him, that was good enough for him for now.

He would gladly wait.

Jean inhaled sharply, feeling that she'd done him wrong. Steve didn't deserve an indecisive person, but she just had to pull herself together before entering a relationship. She just had to.

"I'm sorry." She apologized once again, her eyes glistening.

Steve sent her a playful smile, trying to lighten the mood. "You don't have to be sorry all the time."

The red haired girl looked down to the tiles bathroom floor, she

remembered when she'd uttered those exact same words to him long ago and a matching grin soon played on her lips. She then gave him the same reply he gave her at the time.

"I did *not* know that." Jean giggled and took her gaze from their joined hands and to his eyes, only to find his face was a short distance from hers, and this managed to make the air trapped in her throat. They looked at each other, blinkless. And she watched his perfectly slicked back hair and how his broad shoulders lowered and raised by his slow breathing.

"So I guess we're not making it to the festival, huh?" He humorously asked.

Jean gently shook her head. "I don't think so."

"There's always a next time." Steve replied, giving a slight shrug.

"Thanks. For always being here for me." She softly spoke, grateful for his always supportive presence in her life. Steve was truly a gift.

And he thought the same about her.

"Don't mention it, and right back at ya." He said, his comforting smile still drawn on his lips.

She gulped, feeling a spark lighting within her the longer they stared at each other, their breathing pattern syncing. Her hand rose with subtlety from his hand to softly place on his bruised cheek.

He felt warm under her fingers. Nice. Jean didn't even realize what she was doing anymore, as she ran her fingers on his cheek. Her fingers traced the form of his jaw, touching his chin and hair.

Steve's heart seemed to stop in his chest for a fraction of a second at the proximity and the soft touch of Jean on his skin.

While the redhead blinked because he seemed closer than before, only a few inches were separating their faces. It felt as if the atmosphere had shifted; it was heavy, intense and raw. Jean almost gave in, knowing that deep down, she wanted this.

Then the bathroom door flew open with a loud whoosh.

As if they suddenly had caught on fire, both him and Jean jumped back, away from each other. They turned to look at the door at the other side of the bathroom.

There stood an aggravated Dustin, a smirking Robin, and a disgusted Erica.

Jean's eyes went wide, as if just now she had noticed what she was about to do. An action that would have completely contradicted her previous statement of needing to think about their relationship.

"What the hell?!" Dustin yelled at the two, placing his hands on her hips, expecting an answer from them like a disappointed parent.

Steve huffed in frustration, resisting the urge to flop on the ground and whine like a child at the interruption of what would've been a magical moment.

"*Why* do you hate me, Dustin?" He hissed through clenched teeth, pulling at his hair in frustration.

Jean laughed.